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OF

A CHAPERON.

*Barbarina Brand*

EDITED BY LADY DACRE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,  
(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.)

1833.

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## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

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I WAS left a widow with seven daughters. I have married them all, or rather, I have let them marry themselves; for I never took any active measures towards bringing about a result which I own to be a desirable one in a family consisting of seven daughters and one son.

I have seen manœuvring mothers succeed; but I have as often seen them fail in their matrimonial speculations. I have seen dignified mothers with modest daughters, pass year after year, unnoticed and unsought; but I have also seen the unobtrusive daughters of retiring mothers form splendid alliances; and at the very beginning of my career as a Chaperon, I came to the conclusion that, as there

was no rule which could ensure success, it was safer and more respectable to do too little than to do too much; better simply to fail, than to fail and to be ridiculous at the same time.

Accordingly, when I had mounted my feathered hat and black velvet gown, or my white satin gown and flowered cap, as the occasion might require, and patiently taken my station upon the chair, seat, or bench which I could most conveniently appropriate to myself, I beguiled the weary hours by studying those around me, trusting for the rest to chance. and to the principles which I had endeavoured to impress upon the minds of my girls; viz. not to flirt so as to attract attention,—not to think too highly of their own pretensions,—and above all, not to be betrayed into laughing at any man before they knew him, by which means more than one girl of my acquaintance has been obliged, for consistency's sake, to repulse a person whom, upon further acquaintance, she might have sincerely preferred.

My daughters were not beautiful enough.

nor did they marry brilliantly enough, to excite the jealousy of other mothers. I had brought them up to avoid a fault odious in all, but especially so in the young, that of being more ready to perceive the failings than the merits of their companions: we were, therefore, a popular family. I had myself the happy knack of being interested in the concerns and distresses of others, and I listened with pleasure to details however trifling: I had consequently many intimate friends.

As people never were afraid of me, transient emotions, and harmless weaknesses, which would have been concealed from a sterner, cleverer, or more important personage, were confessed, or, at all events, permitted to escape in a *tête-à-tête* with the good-natured, quiet, inoffensive Mrs. —. But what am I doing? I wish to preserve my incog, and only hope I have not already betrayed myself by the mention of my white satin, and my black velvet gowns.

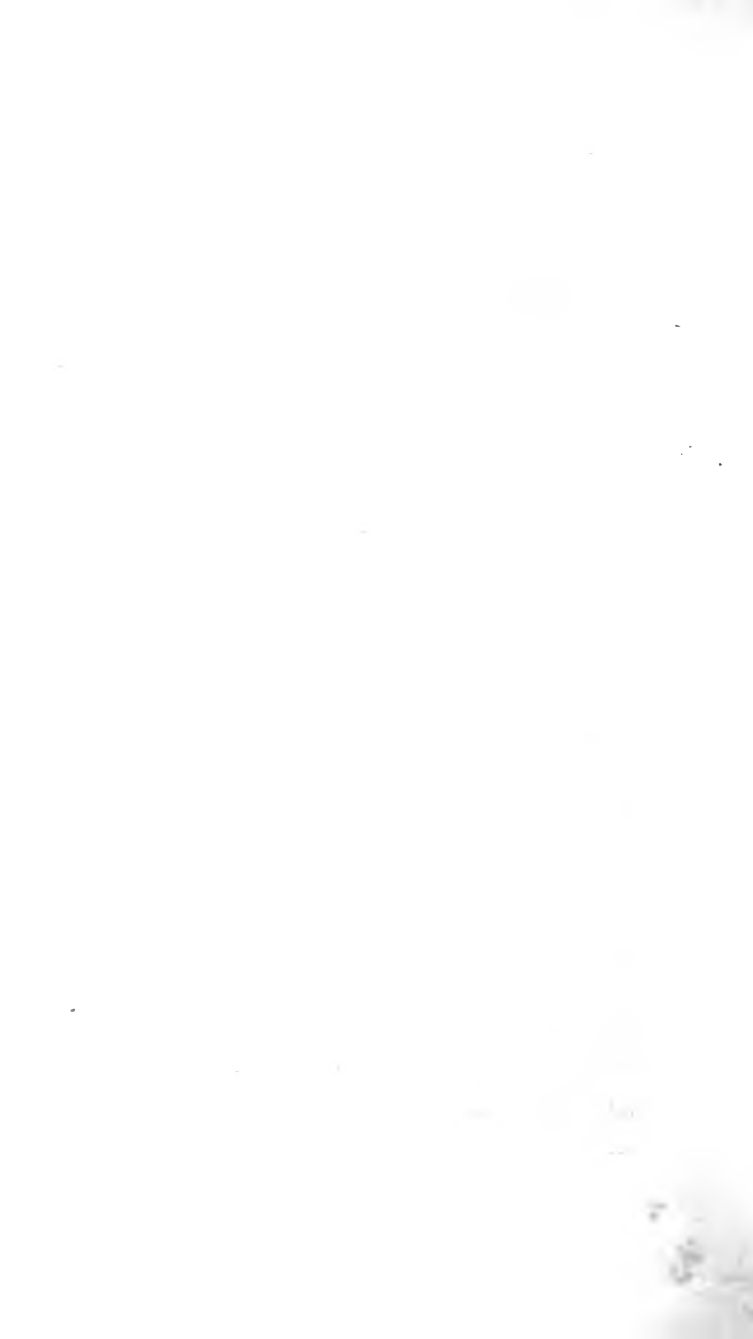
I will write no more, lest some unguarded expression should give a clue to my name: I will simply add, that my last daughter hav-

ing been comfortably established a year ago, “Othello’s occupation is gone;” and my purse being somewhat drained by the purchase of so many *trousseaux*, I have occupied my leisure, and, I trust, shall recruit my finances, by portraying characters and feelings which I believe are true to nature, although under circumstances and in situations not founded on fact.

THE SINGLE WOMAN

OF

A CERTAIN AGE.





# THE SINGLE WOMAN

OF

## A CERTAIN AGE.

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### CHAPTER I.

*Duke.* And what's her history?

*Viola.* A blank, my lord.

WHY is it that the bustling matron, who (having, without preference or selection, married the first man who proposed to her,) has spent her days in the unsentimental details of a household, a nursery, and a school-room, merely considering her partner as the medium through which these several departments are provided for?—why is it that the languid beauty, who has sold herself to age or folly for an opera-box, an equipage, a title?—why is it that the scold, who has jangled

through a wedded life of broils and disputes—and the buxom widow, whose gay and blooming face gives the lie to her mourning garments?—why is it that they all cast a pitying glance of contempt on the “single woman of a certain age” who ventures an opinion on the subject of love? Why do they all look as if it were impossible she could ever have felt its influence?

On the contrary, the very fact of singleness affords in itself presumptive evidence of the power of some strong and unfortunate predilection. Few women pass through life without having had some opportunities of what is commonly called “settling;” therefore the chances are, that betrayed affections, an unrequited attachment, or an early prepossession, has called forth the sentiment of which they are supposed incapable—and called it forth, too, in a mind of too much delicacy to admit the idea of marriage from any other motive than that of love.

The following story, which is ushered into the world by so unattractive a title, might afford an example, that a life which appears

“ a blank” in the history of events, may be far from “ a blank” in the history of feelings.

By the death of her father, Lord T——, Isabella St. Clair found herself, at the age of nineteen, an orphan possessed of a considerable fortune, of great personal attractions, and of all the accomplishments which, in these days of education and refinement, are expected to grace young ladies of fashion. Her brother, the young Lord T——, was not of an age to serve as her protector, and accordingly she removed to the house of her uncle and guardian, Sir Edward Elmsley.

Sir Edward and Lady Elmsley were of that respectable class of English gentry who, by not attempting to move in a more elevated circle than that in which they are naturally placed, command the esteem and respect of those above, as well as of those below them. Their daughter Fanny, although of the same age as her cousin Isabella, had not yet been initiated into the pleasures and the pains of a London campaign.

Isabella, who had been accustomed to a life of excitement, was not sorry, at the ex-

piration of her mourning for her father, to join in whatever gaiety was going forward, and to exercise once more the power of that beauty which, even in London, had attracted its full share of admiration.

In the country, where beauty, rank, fashion, fortune, and accomplishments are not so common, of course the brilliant Miss St. Clair was the star of every ball ; and all the young men of any pretensions in the county, vied with each other in obtaining a word, a smile, a look from the lovely Isabella.

Nor did the charms with which she was really endowed lose any thing from want of skill in the possessor. She had the art of keeping an indefinite number of persons occupied with her alone ; she had left her shawl in the next room, and, with a thousand graceful apologies, she asked one person to fetch it for her, at the same time holding her cup in a helpless manner, and casting a beseeching glance around her, which brought a hundred eager hands to set it down. Then she looked timidly confused at having given so much trouble. Presently she had a message to send

to her cousin Fanny, with which she despatched one admirer, while she hinted in a low voice to another, who was pressing her to stand up in the next quadrille, that she did not like to do so while Fanny was sitting still. The devoted youth flew to dance with Fanny, claiming as his reward the hand of Isabella for the ensuing waltz. She knew how to pique and to excite the vanity of each: to one she implied she had heard something of him which certainly had very much surprised her; to another that she understood he had been abusing her horridly; she playfully scolded a third for not admiring Fanny half as much as he ought, and wondered how he could be so blind. She assured a fourth that he and all the world had quite mistaken her disposition, indeed, that scarcely any one did understand her; implying there was depth of character and feeling beyond the reach of the multitude, and thereby piquing and interesting the sentimental youth to discover these hidden treasures.

Fanny, meanwhile, placid and contented, enjoyed what she met with that was agree-

able, without its ever crossing her imagination to feel envy or jealousy of her cousin. She was not mortified, for she saw her so beautiful, so brilliant, that all rivalry seemed out of the question. They were happy and affectionate with each other. Isabella, constitutionally gay, good-humoured, and joyous, was never crossed or thwarted by Fanny, and, although an acute observer might discover in her fondness for her cousin, a tone of superiority, a protecting kindness, Fanny so completely acquiesced in that superiority, that it never for a moment wounded her self-love.

About a year after Isabella's arrival at Elmsley Priory, the society of that neighbourhood received a very animating addition in the young Lord Delaford, who, soon after his return from his travels, established himself at his beautiful Castle of Fordborough. He joined to the most prepossessing appearance and manners, an excellent character, considerable talents, and extensive possessions. He paid a visit to Sir Edward Elmsley, and of course Isabella counted upon him as her de-

voted slave, and thought such a conquest was not to be neglected.

She was rather surprised that he handed the quiet Fanny to dinner, but she satisfactorily accounted for this circumstance by supposing he considered it a courtesy to which the young lady of the house was entitled. But when, in the course of the evening, he voluntarily seated himself by Fanny, and appeared interested by her conversation, she certainly was very much astonished, and not much pleased.

To Lord Delaford, who had lately come into the country, wearied and disgusted with the dissipation of Paris, and the turmoil of London, the style, the vivacity, and even the beauty of Isabella, were too much what he had been in the habit of seeing every day, to possess any peculiar attractions for him ; while the calm brow, the placid air, the perfect innocence and unconsciousness of Fanny's manner, appeared to him as soothing and refreshing, as the green trees and verdant meadows after the glare and confusion of the streets. In conversation he found her modest and well-informed, and he sought her society the next

day and the next. By degrees his manner assumed a tone of admiration which, to a person accustomed as she was to be placed in the shade, had more than the usual effect attributed to admiration, that of enhancing the charms by which it was first excited.

Those who imagine they do not please, often neglect the means by which they might do so; whereas, if they once become aware that all they say and do finds favour in the sight of others, they are no longer ashamed of being charming, or afraid to be agreeable.

People in general were astonished at the wonderful improvement in Fanny, but her mother remarked that, when Lord Delaford entered the room, her soft brown eyes shone with a lustrous consciousness, that if he addressed her, the colour mounted in her pale and delicate complexion, and she understood full well the cause of this improvement.

If Lord Delaford had been originally attracted by the unruffled placidity of her expression, he was infinitely more so by finding that his presence had the power of disturbing that placidity. Though he could not doubt



that he possessed many qualities which might make him an object of preference to young ladies, and every adventitious qualification to make him approved of by the old ; though he must have known he had been sighed for by daughters, and sought by mammas ; still he was not one of those men who are piqued by coldness, and inflamed by the difficulty of winning the object. On the contrary, there was a natural diffidence about him which made him vulnerable to the attentions of women, and easily daunted by any appearance of disinclination.

Fanny was too amiable and too humble ever to have felt jealous of her cousin, but she was not insensible to the pleasure of finding herself suddenly preferred by the one person whose favour all were desirous to gain. Every thing seemed to prosper to the utmost of her's or her parent's wishes. Lord Delaford became every day more serious in his attentions, and there appeared to be no reason why Fanny should not yield to the engrossing fascinations of a passion which, if felt for the first time at the age of twenty, combines with the

freshness of a first love, the depth and strength of which the more formed character is susceptible.

In the mean time Isabella no longer found the same gratification in the insipid crowd of common-place admirers, whose suffrages had before elated her. She felt, truly enough, of how much more value were the sincere esteem and affection of one true heart, than all the frivolous admiration of people she did not care for ; all her former conquests lost their value in her eyes ; she, for the first time, felt herself the forgotten and neglected one. Vanity, like ambition, only becomes the more insatiable by being fed, and, as the single Mordecai, who refused to bow before the pomp of Haman, embittered all the glories of his triumph, so the one person who was proof against her charms, outweighed in her estimation the herd who acknowledged their power.

She had too much tact, too much knowledge of the world, too much spirit, to allow these feelings to be visible to the eyes of common observers. Lord Delaford and Fanny were so completely occupied with each other that

they could not remark anything about Isabella ; but Lady Elmsley, with maternal quick-sightedness, perceived her mortification, and with pride, which may perhaps be pardoned in a mother, could not help being pleased that, at length, her daughter's merits should be valued, as they deserved, above those of Isabella.

Occasionally Isabella caught a glance of triumph which escaped from the eyes of Lady Elmsley; and she resolved to let slip no opportunity of gaining the attention of Lord Delaford.

Mortification is but half felt while it is only felt in secret. It is not till we perceive it has been remarked by others, that it becomes one of the most painful sensations to which the weak, the vain, and the worldly, are liable, and one from which the most humble and pure minded can scarcely boast of being entirely free.

## CHAPTER II.

*Gerarda*.—Que todo se aprende hija y no hai cosa mas facil que engañar a los hombres de que ellos tienen la culpa ; porque como nos han privado el estudio de los ciencias en que pudieramos divertir nuestros ingenios sutiles, solo estudiamos una, que es la de engañarlos, y como no hay mas de un libro, todas lo sabemos de memoria.

*Dorotea*.—Nunca yo le he visto.

*Gerarda*.—Pres es excellente letura, y de famosos capitulos.

*Dorotea*.—Dime los titulos siguiera.

*Gerarda*.—De fingir amor al rico y no disgustar el pobre.

De desmayarse a su tiempo, y llorar sin causa.

De dar zelos al libre y al colerico satisfacciones.

De mirar dormido, y reir con donayre.

De estudiar vocablos y aprender bailes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Y de no enamorarse por ningun acontecimiento, porquè todo se va perdido, sin otros muchos capitulos de mayor importancia.

LOPE DE VEGA.

ISABELLA had attentively studied the character of Lord Delaford, and she felt sure that if she could once get him within her

toils, she should be able to keep him there. She had discovered, that although too refined not to be disgusted by any open attempt to attract him, there was a considerable mixture of vanity and of humility in his composition; and she flattered herself she could work upon both these feelings.

She one day happened to sit next him at dinner, and contrived, with a tact for which she was peculiar, to turn the conversation upon himself. She said she never knew any one of whom she was so much afraid: to which he replied,

“That is very odd! I have always been reckoned a good-natured sort of fellow.”

“Oh, yes!” she answered; “I am sure you are good-natured; but your very good-nature helps to frighten me. You are so unlike other people; and I feel so awed when you are present.”

“Well, that is strange! I don’t think I ever awed any body before. Do I look so cross?”

“Oh! it is not that; but you are so good;

and you always say just what you should say, and no more. I should be afraid to utter, or to do any thing foolish before you."

"Well, I should be as useful to you as Prince Cheri's ring in the fairy tale. It is a pity I am not always by your side!"

"Oh! but then I should always be in a fright;—not that I mean it is a disagreeable sort of fright." And she turned the conversation, fearful of showing any design of attracting him.

In the evening, he, as usual, turned over the leaves of Fanny's music-book, while she was singing, or forgot to turn them over, while gazing with delight upon those melting, yet innocent eyes, which met his so kindly and so trustingly—eyes, that looked as if there lurked in the heart beneath, depths of unawakened and unexplored feelings, which only waited to be excited.

But when he was alone, the remarks of Isabella recurred to his recollection, and he wondered what in him could have struck her as being so singular and so reserved. The

next day, when they were riding, he found himself near her, and reverted to the conversation of the preceding day.

“ I have been quite uneasy, Miss St. Clair, at finding I am so disagreeable as I must be, if I am the precise, formal, measured person, you describe me to be.”

A certain step is gained, when, instead of starting a new and indifferent subject, the topic of the preceding conversation is resumed. Most coquettes know, by intuition, that the best mode of accomplishing this, is to talk to persons of themselves. Isabella's heart beat quicker, at finding how well she had succeeded in awakening his curiosity ; but assuming a nonchalant manner, she answered,

“ Disagreeable ! Surely I never could have said any thing half so uncivil ?”

“ Oh, certainly you did not tell me in so many words that I was disagreeable ; but you implied it.”

“ No, no ! Indeed, I think I said every thing most flattering—that you were so very good.”

“ Well, I suppose if I am so very good,

I must not consider being good, and being disagreeable, as synonymous terms; and yet you made it appear yesterday as if they were?"

"Oh, Lord Delaford! how can you accuse me of saying any thing so shocking? I only declared you were so good, so superior, I was afraid of you."

"But a person who makes you fear him, must be disagreeable to you."

"No, indeed:—I like to be awed. I am fond of an organ in a cathedral; and I admire lofty mountains, and beautiful stormy skies, and every thing that is grand and sublime in art and in nature! Could one bear to hear one's own feeble voice mingle itself with the pealing reverberations of the organ in the glorious pile of St. Peter's? And does one not feel one's own nothingness, when among the mountains, the torrents, the precipices, the peaks, the glaciers of the stupendous Alps? Yet surely these are pleasurable emotions! With me, at least, awe and pleasure are very compatible sensations."

As she spoke, her large and brilliant eye



glanced upwards for a moment, with an expression of lofty enthusiasm.

Lord Delaford gazed upon her, and mentally exclaimed, "That girl has a soul!" Presently, relaxing into a smile, as if ashamed of her own eagerness, she added, "I believe Doctor Spurzheim would discover in me the bump of veneration;" and putting her horse into a canter, the whole party became mixed together, and she addressed herself to some one else. Lord Delaford mechanically found himself by the side of Fanny; but it was some time before they became engaged in any thing that deserved the name of conversation.

By degrees, however, the unobtrusive gentleness of Fanny had its usual effect upon him; and they discoursed calmly and agreeably, upon subjects of literature, or the immediate events of the neighbourhood; but that day there were none of those flattering turns of phrase, that deferential manner of listening, which, not appearing in the common-place form of compliment, have the effect of flattery, without putting one on one's guard against it.

Fanny returned from her ride less exhilarated than usual. She thought the wind was rather cold, and her beautiful, thorough-bred horse, not quite agreeable.

At dinner Lord Delaford sat between Isabella and herself, and his attention was, to say the least, divided between the cousins. Isabella was in high spirits. She was animated by the desire and the hope of pleasing. She caught an uneasy look from Lady Elmsley, and she could not suppress an emotion of gratified pique. She had too much the tone of good society ever to run the risk of being noisy ; her flow of spirits only showed itself by being exceedingly droll and lively ; and though perhaps she amused in some degree at the expense of the absent, her dancing dark eyes glanced with such brilliancy, such merriment, such a look of gay archness, that no one could suspect her of harbouring a feeling of ill-nature towards any one. Nor in truth did she harbour any such feeling. She only wished to amuse ; and there are few people who have not occasionally been led by the intoxicating pleasure of causing a laugh, into ridiculing

persons towards whom they felt no ill-will. Lord Delaford was entertained, and laughed incessantly at her quaint ideas. He wondered why Fanny did not seem more to enjoy sallies which appeared to him so full of talent and of wit. He thought it argued a want of imagination, which disappointed him. Fanny meanwhile was depressed, she knew not why; but when she retired to rest, in the stillness of her chamber, she made a discovery as painful as it was humiliating.

Surprised to find herself so very serious, when others were so much amused, in doubt and trembling she looked into her own heart, and she found it to be nearly engrossed by one overwhelming passion. She had always intended to keep herself "fancy free" till she could devote her whole soul, her pure unhacknied affections, to one only object for ever. From the easy footing of society in a country-house, her intercourse with Lord Delaford had been free and unconstrained; his attentions, although constant, were not marked, and nothing had occurred to call her mind to the effect they were gradually, but surely, pro-

ducing. It was not till the fear came over her that he did not care for her, that she discovered she had ever believed in his preference ; it was not till she felt how inexpressibly painful was that fear, that she discovered her affections were fixed on one only object for ever.

She was suddenly aroused from her fancied security, and found within the heart which she had imagined fresh and uncontaminated, love, — unrequited love, and jealousy, — jealousy of her dearest friend. She thought herself degraded. She was miserable. But she did not allow her mortification to swallow up all other feelings. Maidenly pride remained, and she determined he should never perceive the power she had allowed him to acquire over her.

Lord Delaford, on his part, reflected upon the increased attractions of Isabella, and upon the want of vivacity of Fanny. Though no coxcomb, he thought it possible Fanny might entertain for him feelings which, his conscience told him, would have been wounded by the unusual degree in which he had been occupied with Isabella. His goodnatured heart smote

him at the idea of giving pain to so gentle and lovely a being, and he joined the breakfast-party the next morning full of kindness and interest for Fanny, flattered by the interpretation he had himself given to her coldness, and well prepared to return any indications of preference which he might perceive in her manner towards him.

Fanny had schooled her heart, and the more she was really agitated, the more was she resolved to wear a calm exterior; the more she knew there was a sentiment within her bosom which could not be confessed, the more was she resolved no human eye should discover it. She was aware that sudden coolness might be construed into pique, and she determined to be merely careless and indifferent. She did not remember that she might, by this means, lose what most she wished to gain. She did not calculate. The abstract idea that any woman should love any man better than he loved her—that any woman should be won un-wooed, roused her pride for the sex in general; and that she herself should be one of

these poor, weak, infatuated creatures, gave her a sense of humiliation against which her very soul rebelled.

Lord Delaford watched for some indications of the sentiments he had in his own mind attributed to her ; but he found her as she intended to appear,—gay, careless, cold. He did not perceive any affectation in her gaiety, or any thing studied in her carelessness.

Lady Elmsley precisely read the state of her heart, and put the right construction upon the trifles which constitute encouragement or repulse, and which denote preference or indifference ; but Lord Delaford was quite puzzled, and somewhat mortified.

It is said there is an instinct which teaches every one to read their fellow-creatures where love is concerned. This is true of all indifferent spectators, who can decypher emotions, often not acknowledged by the individuals to themselves. Not so the persons most interested. Sometimes they twist appearances to suit their hopes or fears. Sometimes, being aware that their judgment is likely to be prejudiced, they dare not trust to their natural impressions.

Lord Delaford watched the countenance, the eyes, the expression, the words of Fanny for a day or two, and he became each day more convinced his own self-conceit must have misled him. He had studiously avoided such attentions as might commit him, and he now took care to divide them equally between the two cousins. To Fanny, who had been accustomed to his exclusive devotion, this was a virtual withdrawal of them; and she set a more strict watch than ever over all her words and looks. Isabella, who was exhilarated at receiving half, when she had been accustomed to none, was *pétillante de graces*. The more Fanny was aware of Isabella's attractions, and the more she perceived that Lord Delaford became aware of them, so much the more she wrapped herself up in impenetrable, but good-humoured reserve. Her manner lost that confiding, innocent gaiety, which a short time before had been one of her greatest charms, without regaining the bashful ingenuousness, which had at first attracted him from its novelty. She laboured hard to appear calm, and unfortu-

nately succeeded but too well in her endeavours. Lord Delaford was half provoked with himself, for having been so ready to fancy he was irresistible; and half provoked with Fanny, for having given rise to his dissatisfaction with himself.

He was in this frame of mind, when an accident occurred, which confirmed him in his opinion of her coldness. He was riding a restive horse, which he alone had succeeded in subduing, and which he thought was so completely tamed, that he might venture to ride it with the ladies. Isabella admired a flower in the hedge, and he turned his horse round to gather it for her. The animal, who had proceeded quietly by the side of the others, did not like being separated from its companions; and rearing suddenly, fell backwards with its rider.

Isabella was close to him at the moment of the accident, and was naturally dreadfully frightened. He had contrived to slip off on one side, and was not hurt; but there was a moment, when horse and rider appeared as if they would be crushed together.



Fanny was some yards in advance, and only turned round in time to see him as he was getting up from the ground, and was therefore spared the first alarm. She was not a nervous, hysterical person; and although she turned pale, and trembled, she did not fall from her horse, or do any thing that attracted attention to herself. Isabella, really agitated, and really nervous, (as indulged and flattered people are very apt to be,) shrieked aloud, and burst into tears—real tears—for she affected nothing; she only gave way to what she felt, from the consciousness that she was charming, and that her emotions would not appear disagreeable and uninteresting.

She was lifted off her horse, in a fainting state. Lord Delaford was supporting her. Every one was busy about her. In the confusion, her hat fell off, and all her ringlets were floating on the wind: her eyes were half closed; and the long lashes looked beautifully dark on her cheek, which was really pale. Fanny thought she never saw any one look so lovely! Lord Delaford watched her

revival with an expression of intense interest; and Fanny sat still on her horse, unnoticed and unregarded, with feelings of hardness and bitterness which never before had been the inmates of her gentle bosom. This protracted exhibition of sensibility appeared to her perfectly unnecessary; and she could not help thinking that Isabella might have recovered much sooner; that she might have twisted up her own hair, and tucked it under her hat, without any assistance from Lord Delaford; and that there was no occasion for several ringlets to be allowed to escape, and to stray over her face and shoulders.

Such were her thoughts when the party remounted, and proceeded homewards; and she “hoped Lord Delaford was not the least hurt,” in a guarded, constrained, and scarcely soft voice, which grated on his ear, after the languid accents of the fainting Isabella. He turned away from Fanny, and devoted himself entirely to her cousin, whose interest in his safety gave her a sort of right to his care and solicitude.

As soon as they reached home, Fanny

rushed to her room, and there paced the apartment in an agony of mind which frightened herself. She envied Isabella the interest she had excited, while she felt she would rather have died than have betrayed such emotion: yet she was angry with herself for having appeared cold and unfeeling. Presently she heard footsteps approaching her door; and hastily composing her looks, she seized a book, and appeared buried in its contents. It was Lady Elmsley, who came to tell her there was some company expected at dinner. She longed to open her heart to her mother, who, she was sure, by the increased tenderness of her manner, had read the state of her feelings: but Lady Elmsley never sought, or encouraged confidence upon the subject. She saw that Isabella had superseded her Fanny in Lord Delaford's heart, and that her child's hopes were blighted—she knew that an acknowledged preference was far more difficult to eradicate than one which had never been confessed—that pride, and constancy, and consistency, had induced many a girl to persevere in a devotion which, if it

had never been avowed, would have died away ; and she judged of Fanny by the rest of the world.

The end of this day passed off as many succeeding ones did—in sad and bitter calmness on the part of Fanny—in flattered vanity, and growing love, on the part of Isabella—in gratitude, admiration, amusement, and pique, which were fast ripening into love, on the part of Lord Delaford.

## CHAPTER III.

Though Marian's frolic mirth so gay  
The sultry hay-field cheer,  
Say, when the short, cold, sunless day,  
Shall close the parting year,  
Will her gay smile then beam as bright,  
And beam for only thee ?  
Will winter's toils to her seem light  
As they had seemed to me ?  
Say, will she trim thy evening hearth ?  
Duteous, thy meal prepare ?  
Nor know, nor dream, a bliss on earth,  
Save but to see thee there ?

*Unpublished Poems.*

AT length the decisive moment came. Lord Delaford made his proposals to Isabella, and was accepted. Isabella herself, in all the flush and agitation of the event which decided her fate for life, came to Fanny's room and told her what had happened,—not to triumph over her.

No: she had of late been so completely occupied by her own feelings, that she had almost forgotten those she had suspected in Fanny, and she came simply in the fulness of her heart, to give vent to all the mingled emotions which every woman must experience on such an occasion. Fanny had for some time prepared herself for this termination to all her hopes and fears. Yet when the fact was certain, when she heard it with her own ears, it came upon her like a thunderbolt. She turned deadly pale; she thought that she was going to faint; but the recollection that she should be committed, not only to her successful rival, but through her to Lord Delaford himself, again restored her self-possession, and after a momentary struggle, which, thanks to the dim light of the embers over which they were sitting, and to the engrossing nature of Isabella's own thoughts, escaped observation, she was able to say, "God grant you may both be as happy, as from the bottom of my heart I wish you both to be!"

She spoke with earnestness and solemnity; and Isabella gazed on her for a moment with

surprise. The tone was not exactly that in which young ladies usually converse upon such subjects, and Isabella's former suspicions flashed across her mind. But she looked at Fanny's tearless eyes, and satisfied herself that it was "only Fanny's way. Her cousin always had a more serious turn of mind than most girls."

Perhaps she was as willing not to see, as Fanny was anxious to conceal, the true state of the case; for though her thirst of admiration might lead her to do that which was most painful to another, she was not more unfeeling than a coquette must necessarily be. Moreover, prosperous love opens and softens the heart, and for the time at least produces an amiable disposition of mind. Though consideration for Fanny could not have prevented her attempting to gain Lord Delaford, yet now that she had succeeded in her object, it would have been exceedingly distressing to her to know the pangs under which her gentle cousin was at this moment writhing.

The half-hour bell rang. Isabella hurried away, and Fanny was left alone with her

dreary, desolate, mortified, crushed, hopeless heart.

At dinner the engaged couple did not sit next each other. As there were strangers among the company, Lord Delaford thought it more delicate towards Isabella not to bring observation upon her. As a safe person he offered his arm to Fanny, and consequently sat next to her. Totally unsuspecting of her preference, and feeling on the contrary that her coldness had nipped in the bud the affection he had at first been inclined to entertain for her, he spoke to her of his happiness with the frankness of a friend. He expatiated on the perfections of Isabella, on the beautiful union of liveliness and of gaiety with that depth of feeling, which, though people in general might not suspect it, formed the true basis of her character.

Lovers always invest the object of their love with such merits as they have settled in their own minds to be indispensable qualifications.

There is also something particularly fascinating in the idea that one has discovered



hidden treasures of mind that have escaped the observation of the common herd.

Every word that Lord Delaford uttered was a several infliction on Fanny. All he said of Isabella's liveliness and gaiety she felt was an unflattering contrast to what her manner, of late at least, had been. All he said of Isabella's sensibility she knew to be far from true; and she, who was wrestling with a thousand conflicting feelings, was treated by implication, as a calm, cold, philosophical automaton, by the very person who was torturing them almost past endurance. Every word that he spoke of hope and happiness, was answered by an internal groan of hopelessness and misery.

But her countenance was unchanged; and her eyes, which were habitually downcast, only remained the more firmly riveted to the table-cloth, for fear they should allow any of the emotions that were working within, to shine through them.

When the ladies retired, the mammas congratulated Lady Elmsley in audible whispers upon the brilliant prospects which they per-

ceived were opening before her daughter, and the daughters looked arch when they asked Fanny what sort of a person their new neighbour Lord Delaford was.

The fire and earnestness of his manner at dinner, and the downcast reserve of Fanny's, coupled with the reports which had previously been abroad, in consequence of Lord Delaford's frequent and protracted visits to Elmsley Priory, had been misconstrued by them all, and they fancied the case so clear, that it was fair to congratulate, and to quiz.

In vain Fanny repelled all their insinuations with something approaching annoyance and peevishness. Isabella cast a meaning glance of amazement, and of mutual understanding, which only confirmed the young ladies in their preconceived notion; and when the gentlemen came into the room, they contrived to leave a place vacant by Fanny, while they crowded round Isabella at the pianoforte, to look at a new song, and be rapturous over a new *galop*. Lord Delaford, who thought he had done his duty in avoiding Isabella at dinner, was only intent upon gaining a place

next her, and did not even perceive Fanny, who had been detained from joining the young set, by an old lady who was very particular in ascertaining the stitch of Fanny's work. By the time Fanny had completely explained the mysteries of the stitch, Lord Delaford was among the youthful party, and she then felt it utterly impossible to get up, and to walk across the room to that side of it where he was.

She saw Lord Delaford's devoted manner to Isabella ; she felt herself deserted ! she knew by intuition, that all the people who had just been complimenting, congratulating, and quizzing, were in the act of becoming aware that she was not the object of his attention, that she was not the attraction to Elmsley Priory.

Such trifles as these, when the blighted prospects of a life are in question, seem to an observer, and to the person concerned, when once they are past, as not deserving of a thought, yet, at the moment, they add not a little to the bitter feelings of an already crushed spirit. Singing became the order of the evening, and Fanny was of course called

upon. She had had time to reflect upon her present position, and also to resolve it should ever remain unknown to others; she roused all her energies, and the unusual excitement brought colour into her cheeks, and animation into her eyes. There were other gentlemen in the room, and they were enthusiastic in their admiration of the power, sweetness, pathos of Miss Elmsley's voice. But what were these praises to her? They fell cold and sickening on her heart; Lord Delaford had been in low and earnest conversation with Isabella in the embrasure of the window, and scarcely knew that she had been singing. When the music was over, however, they left their retirement, and both were struck with the fire, the gleam of worked-up resolution in Fanny's eyes, and Lord Delaford whispered to Isabella, "How brilliant your cousin looks to-night!" These few words made her heart beat with a joy at which she was herself shocked, and when she retired for the night, she looked courageously into her own feelings, and severely reproved herself for having felt plea-

sure in exciting a look of admiration in the betrothed of her cousin. She determined no longer to give way to sad retrospection—to dwell no more on blighted hopes, but to further, as far as in her lay, their future prospects of happiness. She knew Isabella's character thoroughly, and could not but be aware there were many points in it which were not calculated to make a happy *ménage*. Love of admiration, a consciousness of power, and a delight in exercising that power, were among the most conspicuous. She also thought Lord Delaford was a man likely to be much influenced by those he loved, and lived with—and she resolved, if possible, to lead Isabella's mind towards using her influence over him for none but good purposes.

She came down to breakfast the next morning placid, and even cheerful. Isabella, whose mind had been quite relieved from the lurking apprehension of having cut out her gentle and unpresuming cousin, by the brilliancy and animation of Fanny the preceding evening, and had settled that she could not care about

Lord Delaford, as she was so evidently elated by the admiration of the other gentlemen, was completely confirmed in this notion by her cheerfulness at breakfast, and by the manner in which she opened the conversation upon Isabella's marriage when they were alone.

In vain did Fanny try to inspire her with the same notions of devotion and self-sacrifice which she herself entertained. Isabella was in love with Lord Delaford—that is to say, she preferred him to all others, and exceedingly liked his love of her, but as for considering his happiness, his pleasure, his advantage, his interests, before her own, the idea seemed to her an idle romantic dream.

Weeks elapsed, and the settlements were arranged ; the wedding clothes prepared.

Lord Delaford had returned, after a fortnight's absence, for the few days preceding the marriage, which was to take place in the village church of Elmsley Priory. Fanny was glad that the ceremony was to be performed in the church, for she thought that the solemnity of the scene, and the holiness of the place, would more completely eradicate

from her bosom the feelings which she feared were rather smothered, than destroyed.

It was, indeed, a day of trial, almost beyond the strength of even her chastened spirit to endure, without betraying the struggle. She was bridesmaid, and she had to stand unmoved during the whole of a ceremony which, to the least interested, is touching and affecting. She heard him utter the solemn vow which separated him for ever from her—she saw their plighted hands—she heard the priest's benediction on the youthful couple as they knelt before him. She did not shed a tear, she scarcely trembled, when Isabella, half-fainting, leaned on her for support. She sustained her graceful bending form, she whispered her words of encouragement, till, at the close, the bridegroom proudly led his wedded wife from the altar.

They returned to Elmsley Priory that the bride might change her dress; Fanny, of course, assisted her friend to take off the wedding garments, the Brussels lace veil, the orange flowers, &c. which were to be replaced by a more quiet travelling costume, and ac-

accompanied her to the room in which breakfast was prepared, and the intimate friends and relations, who had been collected for the occasion, were assembled.

Isabella flushed, agitated, happy, blushing, looked all one could wish a lovely bride to look. Fanny was calm, deadly calm.

At length the travelling carriage came to the door; the packages were all arranged, the servants were on the box, and Lord and Lady Delaford took leave of the family party. The parting kiss went round—Lord Delaford, as one of the family, dutifully embraced his new uncle, his new aunt, his new relations. Fanny saw her turn would come, and she thought she could bear any coldness rather than this kindness; she felt her heart beat as he drew near the side of the room where she stood, she was almost inclined to slip away; but pride got the better; she resolved to do nothing that could look like emotion, or might possibly attract attention, and she stood her ground. When he took her hand and approached his lips to her cheek, she felt a cold shudder run through her, and she



became, if possible, paler than before. He scarcely touched her cheek; she looked so coldly, purely immovable that he instinctively durst not give to her the kindly kiss which, in the joy and warmth of his heart, he had given to the elder branches of his new family.

They hurried through the hall, and, in a moment, the sound of their carriage-wheels was heard rolling by the windows. All rushed to take a last look at them, and Fanny remained, as it were, petrified, fixed on the spot where she had parted from him.

All the visions of her days of hope crowded on her memory; every sign of affection, every flattering attention he had ever shown her, appeared at one and the same moment present to her mind—all that had subsequently passed seemed like a dream; she felt for an instant as if she had been robbed of her betrothed; she had to rouse herself and to look round at the signs of the wedding feast, the cake, the ices, the fruits, and to assure herself of the sad reality. Fortunately, before the attention of the guests was withdrawn from the window, she had recovered her self-possession, had

sent back all the feelings which she now considered as positively criminal, back to the depths of her heart, till she had leisure to drag them forth once more to the light, to examine into them, and to expel them resolutely from their fastnesses.

Her head bewildered with all the thoughts she would not think, and all the feelings she would not feel, she mixed among the guests, and was again the kind, the gentle, the well-bred Fanny, attentive to the wants and wishes of every one ; and although she did once help a good old aunt to jelly, when she asked for chicken, and gave ice to a cousin, who wanted champagne—though she did put a black satin cloak on the shoulders of a worthy old clergyman who was taking his leave, still, in the confusion, these inadvertencies escaped all remark, and the only observation made was, that Fanny was a sweet, amiable creature, but she had not much feeling—they never saw a girl so unmoved during the ceremony, which generally made people cry, and she did not show any sorrow at parting from her charm-

ing friend and cousin, who must be such a loss to her.

“ Well,” added a maiden friend, “ there’s no use in such a deal of sensibility. Fanny has just enough—enough to make her amiable and kind, and not enough to make her unhappy.”

There was one heart which had read poor Fanny’s—one person who had watched her during the few moments when she had stood transfixed—who had remarked the trifling mistakes she had made in her civilities; and a keen observer might have read Fanny’s secret by the devoted attention which her mother showed her; if he had not already discovered it by the coldness with which Lady Elmsley returned the affectionate embrace of the bride and bridegroom. Time does not stand still, though it sometimes moves but slowly, and at length the company dispersed.

The pieces of bride-cake were all directed by Fanny, till her hand was weary of writing “ With Lord and Lady Delaford’s com-

pliments," or "love," or "kind regards," according as the degree of intimacy might require.

The dinner succeeded, a large family dinner, very formal, consisting of the Dowager Lady Delaford, an old Admiral, uncle to Lord Delaford,—his wife, and a very missish daughter, who thought it odd her cousin should have overlooked her charms when he was thinking of a wife;—Lord T——, the bride's brother, a youth at college,—two schoolboys, Fanny's brothers, —the clergyman who performed the ceremony, who had been Lord Delaford's tutor, and was a total stranger to the inhabitants of Elmsley Priory,—and the lawyer, an old friend of the family, whose eternal flow of prosy anecdotes concerning people whom no one knew by name, proved, for the first time, invaluable—they prevented the clatter of knives and forks, and the creaking of footmen's shoes, from falling so sharp on the ear as they would have done, if they had had no accompaniment except the low, gentle voice of Fanny, who was imparting to the worthy clergyman all the details he wished to

know concerning the charity-school in the village. When the cloth was removed, the health of the bride and bridegroom was drunk, and the garrulous old lawyer, who had not forgotten in his quirks and quibbles his original taste for beauty, expatiated till the tears stood in his pale glassy eyes upon the virtues, the discretion, the gentleness of the bride, all which hidden qualities had been made manifest to him by the rosy lips, the blooming cheeks, the dark eyebrows, the white forehead, the glossy ringlets which had dazzled his eyes the preceding evening when she had signed the settlements. Inspired by the subject, warmed by the generous wine, the happy lawyer, directing his eyes across the table to Fanny, begged leave to propose another toast—that before six months were over, he might again find himself at Sir Edward's hospitable board on as pleasing an errand; and he hoped the bridegroom might be just like Lord Delaford—he could not wish his young hostess a more charming husband! All eyes turned to Fanny—her brothers, with a loud “Ha! ha! Fanny!—catch your fish, Fanny!”—Miss Melfort, the

admiral's daughter, with a suppressed giggle ; and Lady Elmsley with a face full of anxiety and fear lest her child might betray herself. Fanny, who had never deviated from the calm and collected manner she had resolved to maintain throughout the whole of this trying day, upon finding herself suddenly the object of remark, felt the colour rush over her forehead, her neck, her arms ; she scarcely knew what they were wishing her ; she thought he was wishing her married to Lord Delaford. Everything became confused—her eyes grew dim ; when Lady Elmsley, pretending that she was overcome by the heat, made the signal for departure, and the ladies left the dining-room. Fanny's trials were not yet over : Miss Melfort, naturally curious upon such subjects, wished to hear all about the whole affair—how it began—how long they had suspected it—whether he fell in love at first sight—whether he or she was most in love—whether he proposed for her to Sir Edward, or whether he spoke first to Isabella herself ; and then, as she was dying that Fanny should wonder how he could have been insensible

to her attractions, she began to wonder how it was, that he should have preferred Miss St. Clair, to Fanny; that, for her part, she did not admire such tall people, nor did she admire such very long ringlets. She was little herself, and her hair was exceedingly *crépé*.

There is an end to all things: at length the wine and water came, and every one retired to rest, and Fanny found herself alone in her own room, and she sat down to indulge in all the luxury of grief. Yes, there is “a joy in grief:”—she revelled in letting her tears flow, and her sobs succeeded one another without interruption, till, exhausted and spent with weeping, she fell asleep the moment she laid her head on the pillow, and never woke till morning.

She was not a person whose eyes betrayed that she had been weeping; and she went down to breakfast, with no outward traces of all she had suffered, but inwardly feeling guilty in having allowed herself to shed such bitter tears for the husband of another. They were, however, to be the last. She saw

that her mother read her heart, and was grieved, and she would not throw a gloom over the declining years of the parent she adored, and whose health, always delicate, had of late become more so. She stifled all vain repinings; she was cheerful, and full of occupation. Her hand did shake when she opened her first letter from Lady Delaford, and her heart sickened when she saw her signature for the first time; and it took a long time to write her first answer, and, perhaps, when finished, it was somewhat measured and cold; but all such letters are more or less constrained, and Fanny was not *demonstrative*, and it all passed off very well.

Lord and Lady Delaford went abroad soon after their marriage, and she was not put to the trial of a meeting.



## CHAPTER IV.

Surtout les femmes nourries dans la mollesse l'abondance et l'oisiveté, sont indolentes et dédaigneuses pour tout ce détail. Elles ne font pas grande différence entre la vie champêtre et celle des sauvages de Canada : si vous leur parlez de bled, de cultures de terres, de différentes natures de revenus, de la levée de rentes, et des autres droits seigneuriaux, de la meilleure manière de faire des fermes ou d'établir des receveurs, elles croient que vous voulez les réduire à des occupations indignes d'elles. Ce n'est pourtant que par ignorance qu'on méprise cette science de l'économie.

FENELON.

POOR Fanny's thoughts were soon called off to real and actual sorrow, in which all other griefs were absorbed; and she almost wondered how she ever could have felt so much about any thing that did not concern her mother. Lady Elmsley's health declined rapidly; and the whole family repaired to Clifton, in hopes that she might derive bene-

fit from the springs. In vain ! Fanny was doomed to endure that sorrow, to which, as being in the due course of nature, some say the mind reconciles itself with more calmness than to many others. But notwithstanding all the arguments of cool philosophy, the loss of a parent is one of the most acute and lasting griefs to which human nature is liable. It often befalls the young, and the prosperous, and coming upon them in the midst of health, strength, and happiness, finds their minds unprepared and unchastened by any previous suffering. Moreover, it is a loss, absolutely irremediable, which, though time may soften, can in no length of time, ever, ever be replaced.

During the whole of her mother's illness, Fanny was so occupied in her anxious attendance upon her, that every other thought was banished from her mind. When Lady Elmsley once, and once only, alluded to the state of Fanny's affections, and spoke favourably of an amiable young man, of excellent connexions, and fair prospects, whose attentions had been unequivocal, she was able to assure

sionally in the autumn, in a reasonable way ; but, as for taking up my abode at Fordborough Castle, I shall not do it."

" But every thing is prepared for you now. He has had the drawing-room and saloon new furnished, and your own boudoir is made lovely !"

" Oh, you know it could not be left as it was in my good mother-in-law's time, with straight-backed chairs, and pembroke-tables ; but I shan't live there, you will see if I do."

" But, Isabella, I am convinced Lord Delaford wishes it."

" Oh ! he fancies it would be vastly agreeable ; but, in fact, he would be moped to death there, and so should I."

" Well, I don't understand being moped to death with a husband one loves," and she felt a slight blush rise to her cheek, which she attributed to the little rebuke implied in her answer ; and she added half-smiling, " you know, you do like him very much, Isabella !"

" Like him ! to be sure I do. He is the best creature in the world, and after all, nobody looks so like a gentleman. He was

generally the best-looking man in the room, except Count Pfaffenhoffen, and he was so foolish that one was ashamed to be seen talking to him, though one endured his conversation for the sake of his waltzing. He is the most becoming waltzer ! He is just the right height, and he does not bend too forward, nor too far back, and he holds his arm just right. What a pity it is he should be so silly !”

Soon after this conversation Lord and Lady Delaford went to their own place, where they established themselves very comfortably. Fanny spent a day with them. She began to flatter herself that Isabella’s worldly notions were only to be found in her conversation, and not in her actions. She left her, very busy, and apparently happy, in making discoveries of curious old China, and arranging it in the drawing-room. While these and similar occupations lasted, she was amused and contented, and her husband was delighted to see her, as he thought, acquiring a taste for the country.

One short week afterwards, Fanny received a note from her, written as she was setting off for London, to meet her dear friend Lady B——, who was only in town for a few days, in her way from Paris to Ireland.

She soon again heard from her, that she was very unwell, and that Doctor S—— had ordered her warm sea-baths, and that she was therefore obliged to go to Brighton.

There they remained till Christmas, when they returned to Fordborough Castle, and brought with them a large party of friends. Fanny was to join them at the particular wish of Sir Edward, who lamented that she did not regain her natural spirits.

She found Lord Delaford looking harassed and oppressed. His company was not of his own choosing, and wearied him. Of his wife he saw but little, and he had no time for his own occupations.

One day he had to do the honours of the place to a party of particular friends, for whom he did not care a straw; another to provide shooting for a set of young men, who thought it

a very bad day's sport if the birds did not get up as fast as two *gardes de chasse* could load their guns.

There is nothing more agreeable than the exercise of hospitality towards those whom you like, and who like you in return; but when every point in which the accommodation and luxuries of your house, fall short of those at such a hall, or such a castle, where every amusement you may be able to provide, merely provokes a comparison between the sport Lord so and so, and the Duke of so and so, gives his friends; the delightful and poetical rites of hospitality, become a tiresome tax upon the time and patience of the luckless possessor of an ancient mansion and an extensive domain.

This fashionable, but most unsatisfactory party dispersed, and Lord and Lady Delaford were on the point of going to town for the meeting of Parliament, when they obtained a promise from Sir Edward, that Fanny should pay them a visit in London after Easter. To do Isabella justice, she felt real affection for Fanny, and sincerely regretted seeing her

so joyless, and conscientiously believed that the pleasures of London, would prove a balm for every sorrow.

Fanny was unwilling to leave her father, and had a vague dread of being so entirely domesticated under Lord Delaford's roof. Had her mother been still living, she would have interfered to prevent her child's feelings and principles being put to so unusual, and so needless a trial; she would have taken care that the peace of mind she had striven so hard to regain, should run no risk of being disturbed; but Sir Edward would not hear of her dutiful regrets at leaving him; and if she harboured any other thought in her mind, it was one which could not be hinted at,—one she scarcely dared own to her secret soul, without implying a mistrust of herself.

To London, therefore, she went. She found Lady Delaford in the full vortex of dissipation. She possessed beauty, rank, talents, and riches. Many women who might boast of these advantages, are not the fashion. But Lady Delaford added to them all, the wish, and the determination to be a leading per-

son in society. What wonder, then, if she instantly accomplished her object, when, without any of the qualifications before enumerated, it is often attained by simple, strong volition.



## CHAPTER V.

Nae mair of that, dear Jenny : to be free,  
There 's some men constanter in love than we.  
They 'll reason caumly, and with kindness smile,  
When our short passions wad our peace beguile :  
Sae, whensoe'er they slight their maiks at hame,  
'Tis ten to ane their wives are maist to blame.

GENTLE SHEPHERD.

LORD DELAFORD, though considerably occupied with politics, was not entirely engrossed by them, and he wished extremely for the quiet enjoyment of domestic life. When he returned from the House, he would fain have been greeted by his wife, or at least he would have been glad to know where he might join her ; but among the many engagements for each night, he did not know where to find her ; and after having once or twice followed

her through the whole list of parties, he gave up the point, and went to bed, jaded and out of spirits.

She seldom came down-stairs till so late, that he had long breakfasted, and was on the point of going out to some committee. Sometimes, being free from business, he determined to remain at home, and to devote the morning to the society of his young and lovely wife. On these occasions he usually found her so beset till two o'clock by her maid, by milliners, by tradesmen, by innumerable notes to answer, and arrangements to make, that she could only answer him with an absent air, her thoughts evidently intent on the organizing of some plan of amusement for that, or the ensuing day. After two o'clock, her drawing-room was of course crowded with dandies whipping their boots—with sage politicians, a race who peculiarly enjoy the *dé-lassement* of a pretty woman's society,—and with litterati, a tribe who are very apt to find peculiar gratification from the favourable suffrage of the lovely and titled, though upon the most dry and abstruse work, into which

the fair critic had never looked, and which, if she had looked into it, she could not possibly have understood. This select crowd (for none but the most distinguished of each genus was admitted) did not disperse till the carriage had been long announced, and the hour of some appointment was long past; when, hurrying away from the admiring throng, she drove from her own door without having given a moment of her attention to her husband.

Lord Delaford's anticipated morning of conjugal felicity generally ended in his seizing his hat and stick, and marching forth at a quick pace, and in no very enviable frame of mind.

Fanny was at first bewildered by this mode of life, but she accompanied her friend through the whole routine, till she found that neither her spirits nor her health could stand such constant wear and tear: she was obliged occasionally to remain at home, while Isabella continued her giddy round of pleasures; and she could not avoid perceiving that Lord Delaford was a man formed for all the charities of life—and that Isabella was

throwing away happiness such as seldom falls to the lot of woman.

The gradual decline of wedded happiness is a melancholy subject of contemplation to the most indifferent by-stander ; how much more so to one deeply interested in the welfare of both parties ! She felt justified in her dejection. Perhaps, if she had witnessed the unrestrained flow of confidence, the fulness of mutual devotion, she might not have found the sight so exhilarating as she sincerely believed it would have been. However that might be, re-assured by her sorrow at not seeing her wishes for their happiness fulfilled—that her joy, if they were fulfilled, would be as great, she reposed in fancied security that the interest she took in his welfare was that of simple friendship, and she did not think it necessary to avoid him if he found her alone in the drawing-room, where he in vain sought the wife of whom he was still deeply enamoured.

He would sometimes sigh to find her still absent, and would occasionally express his desire of a more domestic life ; he even con-

fessed feelings of discontent and dissatisfaction—he wished his wife would give him more of her society—he wished her disposition was more like Fanny's.

These words fell on her ear with a sensation she scarcely knew how to define. Was it pleasure?—was it pain?

It is a dangerous situation for any young woman to be the confidante of any young man's sorrows, especially if they proceed from blighted affections and deceived hopes; but to Fanny, how ten-fold dangerous!

The world is scarcely sufficiently indulgent to those who are deprived of the tender vigilance of a mother; nor are the young who enjoy such a blessing, sufficiently thankful for possessing it. Had Lady Elmsley lived, Fanny would never have been placed in the position of confidante to the domestic sorrows of the man who had won her young affections, as the lover approved of, and courted by her parents. Was it in nature that she should not think, “If I had been his choice, the happiness of which he so feelingly deplores the loss, might then

‘Have blest his home, and crown’d our wedded loves.’”

Another circumstance occurred, which roused her from the security into which she had lulled herself.

Among the multitudes of young men who frequented Lady Delaford's house, some were sensible to the unassuming charms of Fanny, and especially Lord John Ashville became seriously attached to her. There was no possible objection to him, and Isabella flattered herself she should have the pleasure of announcing to Sir Edward that, under her auspices, Fanny had made a brilliant match. Both she and Lord Delaford were astonished when he was rejected, and Fanny herself was grieved to find she could not love him, as she thought it her bounden duty to love the person to whom she should swear eternal constancy. She would have been glad to prove to herself that former impressions were completely obliterated, but she could not succeed in persuading herself that she preferred him to all others.

Nothing is more common than that a person under the influence of mortification and disappointment should rush headlong into a

fresh engagement ; but this most frequently occurs when the mortification is one of which others are aware, and such a measure, it is hoped, will be a virtual disproof of the fact. Though a dangerous experiment, it is one which succeeds oftener than might be expected from so desperate a remedy. Fanny's sense of right and wrong, however, could not reconcile itself to the plain fact of solemnly vowing an untruth, and she already found the duty of watching over her secret affections sufficiently difficult, not to venture to impose upon herself the additional one of loving where she was not inclined to do so.

Perhaps time and perseverance might have conquered her objections, but, a proposal once made, and once rejected, an opportunity is seldom afforded for further acquaintance.

This event had an unfavourable effect upon her mind. It proved to her that her heart was not free, that she had combated in vain.

She was one day looking back upon her wayward fate, and reproaching herself for her weakness, when Lord Delaford entered the room, and inquired for Isabella.

Fanny told him "She was walking in Kensington Gardens with the Miss Merfields."

"And when do you expect her home?"

"Lady B—— takes her from Kensington Gardens to Grosvenor Place, where they dine together; and she accompanies her to the French play in her morning dress, so I am afraid she will not be at home till she returns to prepare for the balls."

"Balls! why how many is she going to to-night?"

"Oh, there are five on the list, but she is only going to two."

"And what becomes of you?"

"I dine with my father's old friend, Mrs. Burley, and then I shall go quietly to bed, for I was at the Duchess's ball last night, you know."

"So, I suppose, I must dine at my club, for I hate a solitary dinner in my own house. If I cannot have the comforts of home, I will play at the independence of a bachelor. Well, when I married, this was not the life to which I looked forward. But how comes it you are so quiet? Why do not you run the same



course? Why are you not at all in the ring? You can endure the sight of your own fire-side. You can find time for conversation, for reading. Your mind is not in a perpetual whirl."

"Oh, but you know I am not very strong; I could not do so much."

"But have you, then, the inclination?"

"Why, not quite; I like it very much in its way; nobody can enjoy society more, I am sure, only——"

"Only you have room in your heart for other things; you are not wholly engrossed by that all-devouring passion for the world. Ah, Fanny, if you had been able to like me when first we were acquainted, I should have been a happier man."

"Lord Delaford!" exclaimed Fanny, in a voice of doubt and fear.

"Why you know, when first I went to Elmsley Priory, you were the person I should naturally have liked, only you did not care for me, and Isabella did. Kind and affectionate as you are in other respects, you seem to have no room in your heart for love, as poor Lord

John has experienced also : But Isabella ! she then seemed made up of feeling !”

Fanny dared not speak, breathe, move, for fear of betraying her agitation. Did she hear from his own lips that he had loved her ? Did she hear him accuse her of coldness, while her brain was dizzy, and her heart throbbing with feelings, which, for two long years, she had attempted (she now felt how vainly attempted) to quell ? And must she sit still and allow him to think her insensible and heartless ? Yes ! religion, principle, and duty, forbade her betraying, by word or look, emotions which might have invested her in his eyes with the only charm in which he fancied her deficient. Impossible to let him ever guess she could harbour an unlawful preference for the husband of another, that other her kind and unsuspecting cousin. The very idea made her recoil with horror from herself. A pause ensued. She longed to break it—could she trust her voice to speak ? What would Lord Delaford think of her silence ? But, if he should perceive that her voice trembled !

She was relieved from her difficulty by his exclaiming,

“ No ! it could not have been my own infatuation ! Isabella was then all I believed her to be ! ”

Fanny perceived he was not thinking of her, and she had time to compose herself. The love to which he had so calmly alluded had left not a trace behind, unless the confidence he felt in her now, might owe its origin to the esteem he had then imbibed for her character.

Following the course of his own thoughts, he continued to compare what Isabella once was, to what she was now become. He regretted their tour on the Continent, and attributed her present dissipation to the habits acquired in Italy and at Paris.

Fanny was able to utter common-place hopes that her cousin would soon be weary of this useless life, and assurances that her heart was still true and warm.

When she was alone, Fanny found herself fearfully happy. A load seemed taken off

her mind. Painful as it might be to know that, by her own pride, (false pride, perhaps,) she had lost the happiness of her life; the joy of finding that she had not let herself be won unsought; that she had not wasted the whole affections of her young pure heart upon a person to whom they had always been a matter of perfect indifference; that her love had not been wholly unrequited, relieved her from that humiliation which had constantly sunk her to the earth.

She was, however, convinced, that a longer residence under Lord Delaford's roof would not be conducive either to the peace or the purity of her mind. She had been considering what excuse she should make for wishing to return to Elmsley Priory, when, in the course of conversation, Lord Delaford one day spoke of her presence, her example, her advice, as the pillar on which he rested his hope of reclaiming Isabella to the quiet duties of a wife, and he entreated her to use all her influence over her cousin towards the accomplishment of this object.

This request gave a new current to her

thoughts. If it was true that she had influence over Isabella, that she might reclaim her from the worldly course she seemed likely to run, would she be justified in leaving her friend at this moment? If she could be the means of causing his happiness, though through another, would she refuse to attempt it?

People often argue themselves into believing it their duty to do what their inclination prompts. In this case, however, Fanny really wished to find herself once more under her father's roof. She trembled at the undertaking before her—she felt a salutary fear and doubt of her own heart, which she had found so weak, and she humbly strengthened herself for the task imposed upon her. She looked with satisfaction to the prospect of being really useful to others, and she thought that next to being the object of his love, the most enviable situation was to be the object of his gratitude.

Modest and unassuming, she had never ventured to remonstrate seriously with Isabella upon her mode of life; indeed, she had always experienced a degree of shyness in alluding

to Lord Delaford, and to the feelings of a wife, which had prevented her saying what she might naturally have done. She had also an instinctive horror of interfering between man and wife—on most occasions, a praiseworthy fear; but which, in complying with Lord Delaford's wishes, she thought it right to overcome.

But how to introduce the subject?

Common and trite observations upon the duties of matrimony, she knew would only excite Isabella's raillery upon her antiquated notions; but perhaps, by alarming her fears, she might have some chance of arresting her attention.

Fanny was so little accustomed to having any plan, any ulterior object in her communications with her fellow-creatures, that her heart beat, and she felt almost guilty, as she seized the first opportunity when they were alone, to say,

“ I wonder, Isabella, you are not afraid of quite losing Lord Delaford's affections.”

“ Quite lose his affections, Fanny! What can you mean? I certainly do not anticipate any such misfortune,” she answered, smiling;

and her eye glanced complacently over the mirror, at which she was trying on the hat which she was to wear that evening at a *bal costumé*.

“Why, my dear Isabella, you must be aware he is not what he was—that your indifference is beginning to have a corresponding effect upon him.”

“Nonsense, Fanny, you are joking!” But she took off the beautiful hat, and sat arranging and re-arranging the feathers, though in a manner which would have been far from satisfactory to the artiste, who had hit off that particular disposition of feathers, in a fortunate moment of inspiration.

Instinct had served Fanny on this occasion, as well as a deeper knowledge of the world; for vanity and affection can both take alarm at the idea of losing the devotion they have been accustomed to. She now remained silent, simply because she did not know what she had best say; but her silence had the effect of piquing Lady Delaford. After a pause of several minutes, Isabella added:

“Lady B—— and Mrs. Clairville tell

me they never saw any husband so devoted as mine ; they wish I would impart my secret, that they might profit by it."

" They mean he is kind, and lets you have your own way ; that he is the least selfish of human beings ; but you must know, and feel, that he is not the contented, cheerful person, he once was ; that his countenance does not brighten when he sees you, as it once did ; that he is silent, abstracted. You cannot be happy, Isabella, and see your husband—and such a husband !—gradually weaning himself from your society, his confidence lessening, his affections cooling ! Did I say he was indifferent ? No, not indifferent ! But he is hurt—wounded ! he is shutting up his heart from you ! Oh, Isabella ! and can you let such a heart close itself to you ? you, who might have all the treasures of that noble mind, that manly understanding, that warm generous soul, poured out at your feet—can you throw away such happiness ?—you, who might be the happiest woman in the whole world !"

Her voice faltered—a tear trembled in her eye—she dared not trust herself to speak



another word. Isabella was struck by Fanny's manner, though she jestingly replied :

“ One would think I was the worst wife in the world ! Now, I could name you a dozen, much worse, among our most intimate acquaintances.”

“ But, Isabella, are you satisfied with not being a bad wife ? Don't you wish to be a good one ?”

“ Well, I do not see what harm I do. I am never cross ; I never worry him ; I do not run in debt ; and I am very civil to all his friends, whenever he asks them to dinner, however great bores they may be : and it is not every wife who can say as much for herself !”

“ But, Isabella, of what comfort are you to him ? If he has any annoyance, does he find you ready to sympathize with him ? If he has any joy, are you there to share it with him ? When do you communicate your thoughts, opinions, pleasures, pains, to each other ? You do order dinner for him ; but really I cannot see what other advantage he derives from having a house, a home, a wife, *une maison montée*.”

“ Well, I see what you are driving at, all this time ; I will make breakfast for him to-morrow morning—that will be quite right and wife-like.”

At this moment, the servant entered to say that the box at the French play, which her Ladyship had wished to have, had been given up, and that it was at her service for that evening.

“ Oh, Fanny, that is charming ! We can go there for the two first pieces, and come home to dress.”

“ But Lord Delaford was to dine at home, and he will dine alone if we go.”

“ Oh ! he does not mind that.”

“ Doesn't he ?” said Fanny, in a low marked tone.

Lady Delaford desired the servant to let the man wait ; and Fanny felt she had gained something.

“ Now, I don't think he will care a pin whether we are at home or not ; and he goes back to the House afterwards.”

“ Not till ten o'clock, he said.”

“ Married people should not see too much of each other. *Toujours perdrix* is insipid !”

“ How much have you seen of him to-day ?”

“ Why, let me see ! he looked in, did he not, just as we had done breakfast, about one ?”

“ Yes ; and your Italian improvisatore came two minutes afterwards, whose energetic rhapsodies of gratitude for your patronage, and admiration of your talents, were delivered in so stentorian a voice, that he took his departure, to prevent the drums of his ears from being broken : And yesterday—what did we see of him yesterday ?”

“ Why, he dined out, you know, at a political man-dinner—that was not my fault—and in the morning, we were at Lady F.’s breakfast.”

“ And the day before ?”

“ Oh ! that was the day of our water-party to Greenwich ; and that occupied the whole day. Well, I see how it is—but you will make me spoil him ; and then, when he is

quite unmanageable and untractable, I shall reproach you !”

“ Well, dearest Isabella, I give you full leave to do so—then !”

Lady Delaford rang the bell, and sent back the tickets.

“ Now how bored we shall all three of us be to-day at dinner. I shall be thinking all the time of that dear little Mademoiselle Hyacinthe.”

“ No ! no ! you won’t, dear Isabella. You will be your own gay, agreeable self.”

Lord Delaford came home to dinner, and seemed pleased to find so small a party. Isabella told him, with an arch glance at Fanny, that he was very near finding a still smaller one ; that the tickets for the best box at the French play had been sent to them after all.”

“ And why did you not go ?” asked Lord Delaford.

Isabella did not like to take all the credit, when she felt she deserved but little, and she answered : “ Why, I believe Fanny suspects

you of having a bad conscience; at least she thought you would not like to be alone."

Lord Delaford cast a glance of gratitude towards Fanny, which made her heart beat with a joy, for which she had no occasion to reproach herself. He thanked them both for their attention to him, and was more gay and communicative than he had been for some time. The dinner was agreeable. Isabella was pleased to feel she was doing right, although she did not know that was the reason she was in spirits. Lord Delaford was gratified, and full of hope that more domestic days were about to dawn upon him. Fanny was animated; but there was a flutter in her animation, she scarcely knew wherefore.

## CHAPTER VI.

Trepideva pur anche per quel pudore che non nasce dalla triste scienza del male per quel pudore che ignora se stesso somigliante alla paura del fanciullo che trema nelle tenebre senza saper di che.

*I Promessi Sposi.*

THE next morning Isabella did come down to breakfast; but it was a great effort, and she soon relaxed into her former habits. Engagements previously formed, could not be broken through, and one engagement led to another. Occasionally, however, Fanny persuaded her to give up one or two of the many evening-parties, and she succeeded in making her rather more quiet in the morning, so that her husband sometimes found her at liberty, and he could sit down and converse upon the passing events.

When he was alone with Fanny he almost invariably talked over his future prospects, and attributed to her every symptom of improvement in his wife. Though these thanks and praises fell on her ear as the most delightful music, still she felt rather uneasy at the kind of understanding that existed between them. Though the subject was one so wholly unconnected with herself, and so conducive to his future conjugal felicity, she could not help a guilty consciousness, when, upon the entrance of Isabella, they changed the topic of their conversation. She resolved, when once she had accomplished the grand object of persuading Isabella to take up her abode at Fordborough Castle, she would rescue herself from her trying situation, return to her father's house, and devote herself with redoubled energy to being the consolation and solace of his widowed home.

London was growing thin. Balls became more rare ; water-parties more frequent ; well-laden carriages, awfully encumbered with wells, imperials, boots, trunks, and bonnet-boxes, &c. were constantly seen whirling along

the streets. One day they happened, all three, to be standing at the window debating whether the weather was sufficiently settled for Mrs. Clairville's rural fête to take place, when they were amused by watching the immense number of nurses, children, boxes, and bundles, which were crammed into an immense coach, one of the three carriages which were getting under weigh at the opposite door. Lord Delaford thought this would be a good moment to enter on the subject, by asking, in an easy tone, but well aware of the difficulties he was going to encounter,

“ And when shall we go to Fordborough Castle, Isabella ?”

“ Heavens, Lord Delaford ! London is just beginning to be agreeable. All the bores are gone, or going, and society is becoming really select, and every thing on an easy, sensible, pleasant footing. The sight we see opposite, gives one a delightful promise of what London will be ! Don't you hear that sound ?” as the three carriages were set in motion, and rumbled heavily along the street.

“ Society will be as light and elastic when



cleared of such heavy component parts, as the air after a thunder-storm !”

“ And have you not had enough of society yet ? I am almost sick of my fellow-creatures’ faces, and yet I am no misanthrope ! Do you not long to see green fields and trees, and flowers, and to smell the sweet smells of the country ?”

“ That is just the reason why I like water-parties, and excursions into the country, and Mrs. Clairville’s breakfasts so much ! How lovely the evening was as we rowed down the river from Richmond ! and as for flowers, where can you see any half so beautiful as at Lady P——’s enchanting villa ? You can have no taste, no refinement, if you do not doubly enjoy all the beauties of nature, in the society of the most polished, the most gifted, in short, of the master spirits of the age ! to say nothing of all the prettiest women.”

“ I do not wish to see all the pretty women ;” and he added with some bitterness, “ I only wish to see one woman, who if she was as perfect in mind, as she is in person, would be all-sufficient for my happiness ; though,” and

his tone changed to one of deep mortification, "I see how little I am so to her's," and he left the room.

Isabella was somewhat startled. Fanny looked at her with a beseeching face of woe, and eyes full of tears.

"You are playing a dangerous game, Isabella. Heaven grant you may not repent it! You have nearly destroyed the happiness of one of the most perfect of human beings. Heaven grant you may not alter his nature too! Heaven grant that may remain unchanged! To see his kindly temper soured, his manly character degraded into the mere obsequious husband of a London fine lady,—I beg your pardon, Isabella, but it would indeed be a melancholy sight!"

"You seem to take a very lively interest in his welfare," answered Isabella, a little frightened at the effect she had produced on her husband, and consequently half inclined to be pettish.

Fanny rejoined with warmth.

"Who can see one woman wilfully cast from her a fate which would be the summit

of happiness to almost every other, and not feel warmly?"

"Why, Fanny, I never saw you so animated; I believe you have fallen in love with him yourself, and are envying me this same fate of mine."

Fanny's face became suddenly crimson. She had been carried away by her feelings—she had forgotten her own secret, she was so moved at seeing him mortified, and wounded, that she thought only of him.

Isabella's half joking speech recalled it all to her; she felt betrayed, discovered, and her confusion knew no bounds. Isabella, surprised at the effect she had produced, in a moment recollected the suspicions she had once entertained, but she was just smarting under the mortification of finding she had over-calculated her complete influence over her husband, of finding that Fanny was right in her advice, and of feeling she deserved her rebuke, and she exclaimed,

"Well, I never saw such a guilty face."

Fanny was thunder-struck, bewildered—she

burst into tears, and hiding her face with her hands, she exclaimed—

“Spare me, Isabella! spare me! if you have discovered my secret, spare me!” and, throwing herself on her knees, she hid her face in Isabella’s lap. “Yes, I have loved your husband, but I loved him before you thought of him, and I have struggled and combated, and fought to subdue my feelings, indeed I have. And I have loved him with a holy love,” and she lifted up her tearful face with an expression of solemn grief and earnestness which was almost sublime: “Yes! I call Heaven to witness, never, for a moment, have I ceased to wish for your happiness, to pray for it, to use every endeavour to forward it. Is it not true? Isabella, I appeal to yourself?”

“Get up, my dear Fanny! For Heaven’s sake! I had not an idea—I did not mean—” and Isabella burst into tears also. She remembered, what she had almost forgotten, how she had once believed him attached to Fanny; she remembered, what she had often persuaded

herself was not so, how she had used every art in her power to wean him from her, and she felt almost as guilty as Fanny did.

She had never intended to inflict such keen anguish on any one, and she was grieved to see what she had done. Had there been anything to excite jealousy, or that might have touched her vanity, perhaps she would not have felt so amiably ; but she was perfectly certain poor Fanny's love was unrequited, and there was nothing mortifying in her husband's having inspired so deep and fervent an attachment. Moreover, an uncontrolled burst of feeling, in a person habitually placid and reserved, is in itself almost an awful sight.

The two friends stood mutually abashed before each other, when Fanny exclaimed,

“ Do not utterly despise me, Isabella. Oh, if you knew half what I feel at this moment you would pity me. And I have been venturing to lecture you, to teach you your duty ! But, indeed, I spoke from pure motives, indeed — though — I have — loved him — ” and she again blushed crimson, her cheeks, her

temples, her neck, at hearing herself speak words which, till that day, had never found utterance from her lips, “it was for your sake, as well as for his——”

“Dearest Fanny,” interrupted Isabella, “do you think I doubt your motives? No! they are pure and excellent as your own innocent heart. I spoke in jest—you so entirely succeeded in concealing your feelings——”

“But do you not utterly despise me now? Me, whom you once thought retiring and dignified, to have been so lavish of my affections as to love one who is devoted to another, to pass my life nurturing a hopeless and an unlawful preference! Oh, that thought almost maddens me sometimes. You must look down upon me as a poor, abject, weak, and wicked creature.”

“Fanny, don’t speak so of yourself, you make me miserable—it is I who ought to beg your forgiveness—it is I who have been guilty towards you—my foolish, selfish vanity could not bear to see him prefer you, and I did all I could to take him away from you; but I had no idea you really cared about him so

much ; I only meant to try my own power ; and then, if you had seemed unhappy, I would have desisted,—at least I thought I would. But you appeared so cool, so indifferent, and then I liked him myself, and then I thought, if you cared so little, why there was no reason why I should give up so brilliant a *parti*, and then—I forgot all about you, and thought only of myself.”

“ You do think, then, he did like me once ? ”

“ It was that which piqued me so much ; but, if I had known what you were feeling, dear Fanny——”

“ Oh, Isabella, this is ridiculous ! You are, as it were, defending yourself to me—to me who stand here self-betrayed — self-accused. Oh ! it is all wrong ; this must not be ; we must forget all this—bury it in oblivion—let it be as though it had never been. Only make him happy, dearest Isabella, for your own sake—for his sake, and a little for my sake too. Make him happy, and I shall rejoice in the fate that has made you his wife—make him happy, as you value your own happiness and his, in this world and the next. But I forget

myself again. It is not for me to guide others—weak, erring, sinful creature that I am.”

She sank on the sofa, and pressing her hands upon her eyes, and resting her head on the arm of the sofa, she strove to command and to subdue herself.

Isabella stood motionless beside her, in thought as deep and as painful. A mist seemed to have fallen from her sight. She looked on life with different eyes from what she had done an hour before.

The broken-hearted quivering form before her, read her a lecture upon the effects of worldliness, which she had never thought of before. She saw, for the first time, what havoc blighted affections might cause. She thought of her husband, and she said to herself, “ Shall I, through my own wilful folly, cause the misery of two good and amiable beings? I have already blasted the prospects of one, shall I throw a blight over those of the other, and that other, the being I have sworn to love as long as I have life? Shall I have robbed poor Fanny of what would have made her



happiness, and shall I not value the prize myself?"

A flood of tender and self-reproachful feelings rushed over her soul. Fanny's grief cut her to the heart—she gazed upon her till she felt herself cruel and odious. She pictured to herself what sufferings she must have inflicted upon her during the days of her courtship, on her wedding-day, on a thousand other occasions; she remembered her unfailing, uncomplaining gentleness; she thought of the good advice she had given her at various times, and felt how generous and how judicious it had been.

Seating herself by her side, she gently lifted her head from the sofa—she kissed her—she wept with her—she used every tender and endearing epithet — she implored her to be comforted.

"I am weeping for my own degradation," she replied, "that the secret I scarcely dared own to myself should be uttered in positive words, and to you, to his wife! — and you will betray me to him, you will tell him, I am sure you will. Oh! that I should have

come to this!—I, who hoped to have passed through life with a fair, untarnished name, though my wretched heart might break! Oh, Isabella! in pity keep my secret—spare me this last bitter drop in the cup of life! He respects me now, and I think it would kill me to be despised by him.”

Her broken voice was choked by sobs—she again hid her face in her hands—she seemed to shrink into herself.

“Dearest Fanny! what shall I say, what shall I do? If you knew how your anguish harrows my very soul! I will promise anything, I will do anything that can relieve your mind.”

“Will you indeed do anything that I ask?” said Fanny, looking up from her tears with a face in which beamed a high and lofty hope: “Then, all I ask of you is, to be happy: and to be truly so, you must place all your happiness in him; you must let no other feelings interfere with what is conducive to his welfare, his respectability. Promise this, Isabella, and I ask no more.”

“I promise you, dearest Fanny!” and

kneeling at her feet, her hands clasped and laid on Fanny's knees, Isabella solemnly repeated, "I promise you that, for your sake, as well as for his own, I will love, cherish, and obey him, in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in poverty or in wealth: I will strive to be unto him a loving, dutiful, and virtuous wife."

"Thank you, my own Isabella!" exclaimed Fanny, and throwing themselves into each other's arms, they mingled tears and embraces. At length Fanny added, "It is a weight off my mind that I have no longer anything concealed from you, Isabella; and if I could but feel sure that you, and you only, should know my weakness——"

"Shall I promise?"

"Do, dearest Isabella; let me hear a vow of secrecy pass your lips, and I think it will go farther towards eradicating every vestige of former folly than anything else can do."

"I promise you that no one word of this day's conversation shall pass my lips; and I promise that, except by my future con-

duct, you shall never be reminded of it. Will that satisfy you?"

"Oh, yes, generous, kind, good Isabella. You are only too good, too kind, and make me feel so inferior to you."

"But, Fanny, we must make haste and go into the country. How soon can we go? I wish we could set out to-morrow; I long to begin my new career; I am so afraid of growing worldly again in London,—I mean worldly in my inclinations; my actions I can control, and my vow is sacred. But how shall I set about opening the subject to my husband? He was really angry to-day."

"What so easy, dearest Isabella? Go at once to him, and say you saw he was annoyed, and that you are sorry he was so, and that, rather than annoy him, you are ready to go whenever he wishes."

"He will think a very sudden change has come over me: however, I will try."

That evening Fanny pleaded a head-ache, and went to bed. She was totally unfitted for society, and could not have ventured

into Lord Delaford's presence ; so that, when he came in, he found Isabella alone.

For the first time he wished for company ; he felt a *tête-à-tête* with his wife awkward and unpleasant. He was displeased and disappointed : it was evident to him he was not loved as he loved, and he was not yet worked up to the point of accomplishing by authority, what he fain would have accomplished by affection : his manner was cold and abstracted.

Isabella perceived that Fanny's advice was not given before it was needed.

After a silence of some minutes, during which she had twisted a note into every variety of form of which a note is capable, and he had turned over the leaves of a very old Review, in which there was not one entertaining article, she resolved to break the ice at once. Shaking back her long locks, she looked up in his face, and holding out her hand to him, she said—

“ I want to make friends, Henry.” Then, smiling with a frankness of manner, which,

when combined with anything of emotion, was in her almost irresistible — “ I don’t want to lose your affections by being obstinate and wilful, and I am ready to go into the country whenever you please.”

“ Are you in earnest, Isabella, or am I dreaming ?”

“ I am in real good earnest, and you had better take me in earnest, for fear my good resolutions should evaporate. I do really wish to go into the country, and to be very good ; — as good as Fanny.”

“ But can you be happy with only me ?”

“ Why, I mean to try ;” and she gave him a glance, such as a pretty woman can give when she feels she has regained her power, but means to use it in the most agreeable manner.

“ Then I am the happiest of men !” said, and thought, Lord Delaford.

Reconciliations, joy and peace of mind, are totally uninteresting ; therefore, the sooner the present story is brought to a close, the better. Lord and Lady Delaford went almost

immediately to Fordborough Castle — Fanny returned to her father. She experienced real pleasure in finding herself again at home, and in ministering to the comforts of her kind parent.

By some odd turn of the human mind, the avowal of her secret feelings to the very person towards whom they were an injury, went farther towards eradicating them, than all her own reflections and resolutions. Her conscience felt lighter ; she looked back upon them as a matter of history ; and her affection for Isabella had warmed into a real and ardent friendship. Every one loves a person whom they have served, essentially served ; and every one loves a person, over whose conduct they feel they have great influence.

One morning, Lord Delaford having rode over to Elmsley Priory, took an opportunity of telling Fanny that he was the happiest of men, and that he was aware he owed all this happiness to her. Then did Fanny enjoy pure and unalloyed satisfaction ! She

felt she had not lived in vain : she had been of service to her fellow-creatures, and she felt raised in her own estimation.

Isabella, meanwhile, laboured hard to put in practice all the good advice she had received from Fanny. The happiness she found she had the power of bestowing, repaid her for her self-denial in relinquishing the exciting pleasures of the great world ; and before she had time to weary of her domesticity, she found herself in a situation which called forth other, and as tender feelings.

While she was in Italy, a premature confinement had prevented her knowing the engrossing affection of a mother, and had allowed her to plunge again into the vortex of dissipation.

A growing family is an excellent nostrum for keeping down an active, restless spirit. Time, health, and thoughts must be, in a great measure, devoted to their children, by those mothers who do not utterly neglect their duty ; and the constant intercourse with such a mind as Lord Delaford's, and the frequent visits which, after a time, Fanny paid at Ford-



borough Castle, gradually produced in her character a reformation of all that was reprehensible.

Fanny found new objects of interest in Isabella's children: she was full of occupation at home; she was her father's darling. Her life was a retired one, especially when Lord and Lady Delaford were in London in the spring; and as there are not many very charming *partis* in the immediate neighbourhood of Elmsley Priory, and as she would doubtless be somewhat difficult in her choice, and as she is no longer quite as young or as blooming as she has been, it is more than probable she may become a "single woman of a certain age."

Though such should be her fate, may she not be allowed to have an opinion, should "affairs of the heart" be discussed in her presence?



MILLY AND LUCY.



# MILLY AND LUCY.

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## CHAPTER I

Affection true and strong, and simpleness  
His goods and chattels, and her bridal dower !  
Riches more sure two wedded hearts to bless  
Than fortune's proudest gifts in partial hour :  
Unknowing to define by words the power,  
That held their spirits in that blissful thrall ;  
Pride cannot chill nor jealous anger sour,  
Each other's wish they evermore forestall,  
And of Love's darts and flames they never talk at all.

*Manuscript Poems.*

“ WELL, nurse, a wedding is not a merry thing, after all. I could not help crying bitterly to-day when my sisters were married, and yet, it is what we have all been wishing for so much. I am sure papa and mamma were in the greatest of frights when they thought

Captain Langley would sail without proposing to Lizzy ; and when Sir Charles spoke out to papa, after we were all gone to bed, I never shall forget what a banging of doors there was, mamma popping into all our rooms to tell us the good news !”

“ Ah, poor young ladies !” said Nurse Roberts, as she was undressing the blooming Lucy, the evening of the day on which two of her sisters had been safely disposed of to two gentlemen, the connexion with whom gave great satisfaction to Colonel and Mrs. Heckfield.

“ Poor young ladies !” repeated Lucy in a tone of surprise : “ why do you pity my sisters, nurse ?”

“ La, Miss, I don’t justly know ; but somehow ’t isn’t the sort of wedding as I likes.”

“ Why, what sort of wedding do you like ?”

“ Ah, Miss Lucy, I am an old woman, and I have old-fashioned notions ; but I likes to see young people marry, as has a respect for one another.”

“ Why, nurse, I am sure Captain Langley and Sir Charles were quite respectful. What can you mean ?”

“ There wasn’t no time, Miss, no time for them to get to have a respect for one another. I have heard talk of love at first sight, to be sure, but to my mind there wasn’t no love at all ; and that’s the truth of it. ’Tis my belief the Captain he wanted to take a wife to India, because, as I’ve heard say, ladies are scarce there, and here there’s more of a choice ; and Sir Charles he wanted a lady to sit at t’other end of the table, and be civil and genteel to the gentlefolks when they comes a visiting to him ; and as for poor Miss Sophy and Miss Lizzy, I don’t see that they liked these two gentlemen a bit better than twenty other gentlemen as have been here at one time or another.”

“ Well ! I never should have guessed you were so romantic, nurse. Do you know this is really the true spirit of romance ?”

“ No ! no ! ’Tan’t romance, nor book-nonsense as I’m talking about. But when a woman’s once married, she may have many

trials and troubles. There's Miss Lizzy going into foreign parts, and there's no knowing what a wife may have to go through for her husband, first or last, whether at home or abroad; and if she has not a spirit in her that she does not care where she goes, nor what she does, as long as it's for his sake, why, sometimes 'tis hard to bear."

"But when people marry, they marry to be happy, not to go through trials and troubles."

"And do you think, Miss, unless Miss Lizzy loves Captain Langley dearly, she will be happy when she is a thousand and a thousand miles away from her friends, and in a strange country? No! no! I knows what 'tis to be alone among strangers, and I knows 'twould have been hard to bear, if it had not been for poor John's sake!"

"Were you very much in love then, nurse?" and Lucy's eye twinkled with an arch glance of amusement as she asked the question, for at the moment she saw reflected in the glass her own blooming cheeks, rounded chin, rosy lips, and flowing locks, and the withered



face, thin lips, grey hair, and close-crimped cap of the old woman. "Were you very much in love?" she repeated in rather a drawling sentimental tone.

"I don't know about that, Miss; but he was true to me, from the time I was quite a slip of a girl, and it would have been hard if I had been the one to change. I told him I never would; and I kept my word."

"And did he keep his?"

"That he did, poor soul! There was not a better, nor a truer-hearted man anywhere, than my poor John was. And though I had known some trouble before, I never knew what 'twas really to grieve till I lost him!" The poor old woman gave a deep sigh, and Lucy said in a kind and feeling tone of voice:

"Was it in America, you lost your poor husband? I know you once were there."

"Ah! sure enough was it, my dear young lady; and not a friend nor a relation (besides my two fatherless babes) had I that side of the water, when I saw my poor John put into the ground. 'Tis that makes me think so

much about Miss Lizzy. I am old, Miss, and I have known troubles and crosses; and I can't help looking forward to what may happen."

"But Captain Langley, you know, has friends and relations in India; and every body says Lizzy will have so many people to wait on her, and beautiful jewels, and all kinds of things! How could you, dear nurse, go into a foreign land, if you had no friends and relations there?"

"Oh, Miss Lucy! 'tis a long story; and you had better go to bed, and go to sleep."

"Now do tell me to-night, nurse? I can't go to sleep, I am sure; and I do feel so interested about you and your poor John."

The old woman's heart warmed at hearing her husband's name spoken so kindly; and she was nothing loth to begin her story.

"Why, you see, Miss, John and I, we were neighbours' children, and we used to come home from school by the same path; and we often went nutting, and gathering blackberries together, and he was always a civil, good-tempered boy, and the folks used to call us

the little sweethearts; and so, when we grew bigger, we wished to get married: but father he said, ‘No, by no means! he would not hear of it!’”

“But why did your father object to such a respectable young man?”

“Why, you see, Miss, he was a ropemaker, and was in a good way of business, and had got above the world; and John, he was only under-gardener at the Squire’s. He was a handy, sharp young man; but he had not any thing but just what he earned from week to week; and father said, he would not hear of no such nonsense, and we must leave off courting. We both saw that father was right not to agree to our marrying then; but we thought it hard that we were not to speak to each other any more. My own mother was dead; and my father’s second wife she aggravated him against us, and said, if we saw each other as usual, we should be sure to marry; and then he would have to keep us off the parish; and that I was a likely, fresh-coloured girl, and might do better for myself, and might get somebody who would be a help

instead of a hindrance to the family. So I told John I would not marry without father's leave, for I knew that would be wrong ; but that I would never have any body but him, if it was ever so.

“ My stepmother, she never let me out of her sight, and always kept me to my work at home ; and I never saw John to speak to him. Of a Sunday, when we came out of church, he always stood near the hand-gate, and sometimes, if there was only father, he opened it for us ; and as long as he did that, I was sure he was true to me.

“ One morning, about a year after my father had said he would not hear no more of John Roberts, and that his girl should marry somebody as had a house to take her to, and enough to keep her when he had got her there ; 'twas a Monday-morning, and I had washed up the tea-things, and swept up the hearth, and was just holding a bit of wood-embers in the tongs for father to light his pipe by, before he went to his work, when what should I see but John's face as he went by the window to the door. I was like to

let the tongs fall, it came upon me so sudden ! John knocked at the door, and I shook all over, as if I had got the ague ; for I thought, to be sure, father would be in a towering passion. Father, he never turned round ; but he kept drawing in his breath to make the pipe light, and he said, ‘ Why don’t you go and open the door, girl ? ’ So I went to the door, and opened it, and in stepped John ; and he said never a word to me, he only just gave me a look, and he went straight up to father, and said :—

“ ‘ Mr. Ansell, don’t take it amiss if I am come to say a few plain words to you. You won’t let me have your daughter—you think we shall come into trouble, and be a burthen upon you ; and you think Milly can do better for herself ? ’

“ ‘ Yes ! ’ said my father ; ‘ you speak right enough.’

“ ‘ But Milly has told me, she’ll never have nobody but me ; and you know, Mr. Ansell, she’s a girl of her word ; and you know you could not get her to marry Mr. Simpkins, the tailor ; no, nor you won’t be able to get her to marry

no other lover, if she should have a dozen—I know you won't; and I won't have no other girl! But that's neither here nor there—what I've got to say is this—I have just had sent me a letter from my brother as is in Canada; and he tells me, if I want to make my fortune, I have only to take ship at Liverpool, and come to him at Halifax; and there, he says, any man as knows a little of gardening, and such like, has no more to do, but to get as much land as he likes, to set to work, and he will have a good market for his vegetables, and he can be made a man of in no time. He sends me money enough to pay my expenses out, and he says he will see that I want for nothing, till I get into a regular way of business; and now, Mr. Ansell, if Milly an't afraid to venture over the seas with me, I think we shall be able to shift for ourselves; and we need never be no burthen to you, nor none of our friends; and if she won't go,—why, I'll go by myself; and I'll try to make my fortune alone, and come back and marry her some day or another, please God to spare me.' ”

“ What did your father say to this, nurse ? ”

“ Why, father seemed very angry when first John began to speak. I looked at him, and my heart sank within me ; then I looked at John, and his face was flushed like, and his eyes seemed quite bright, he was so full of hope, and I thought I could never bear to disappoint him. My stepmother had come in when she heard John’s voice, and so father turned to her, and said,

“ ‘ Well, Sarah, what do you think of this young chap’s notion ? I don’t much like to have my Milly go away from me altogether, and beyond seas too ; though she has been a little testy, or so, about John—I don’t half like it ! ’

“ I felt so, I did not know what to do ; and I began to cry and to sob ; and John said to me then :

“ ‘ Milly,’ said he, ‘ speak your mind. Do you think you could venture across the water, all the way to America with me ? You know I’ll work hard for you, and I’ll be as tender of you as if you were a babe ; and whichever way it is, I’ll be true to you, if so be I live.’

“ Then father said :— ‘ Milly, if you an’t willing to go along with him, why there’s an end of it at once, and so speak out.’ ”

“ I looked at John again, and the longest day I have to live I never shall forget his face that minute. He was as pale as ashes, and his two eyes were fixed on me with such a beseeching look ! I thought I could do any thing, and bear any thing, sooner than have him go quite away by himself, and so I said,

“ ‘ Father, I am ready to go anywhere that John takes me to ; I know he will always be kind to me. I an’t afraid with him.’ ”

“ Poor John ! To be sure, how his face did change ! his colour came again, and he looked up so proud and so kind like ! I thought nothing would be a trouble to me for his sake then.

“ Father did not half like what I answered, but his wife was very good-natured, and said, that perhaps we should do very well in America ; she had a cousin once that made a great fortune somewhere beyond seas, and that it was very true what John said, we should be



no burthen to our friends when we were so far off."

"She was evidently very glad to get rid of you," interrupted Lucy.

"Maybe 'twas so, for sometimes father and she had words about me. Father never could bear to see me put upon; however that was, she was very kind now, and by degrees we brought father to think about it. And then John, he had to tell him we must get married out of hand, for the ship was to sail in a week, and we had to go to Liverpool, and to buy the things as were wanted on board ship."

"Only a week! That was very short notice indeed!"

"Yes, Miss, and father flew out sadly at first. But there was no help for it, if I went at all. So John went to the minister, and talked to him about it, and the minister helped him how to get a licence, and on the Tuesday John walked to the town, seven miles off, and he bought a licence, and a deal of money he paid for it; but his sister gave him something towards it, and he bought the wedding-ring,

and he came to me Tuesday evening, and showed them both to me, and I thought to be sure it was a dream. Next morning I was to be married, and I dressed myself as neat as I could."

" Ah, by the by, what did you do for wedding clothes ?"

" Why, I had a light-coloured gown as good as new, and the minister's daughter gave me a new straw bonnet, and my stepmother gave me her second-best shawl, and we went to church, and my little sister was bridesmaid, and all the girls round about, as I knew, came to the wedding. Poor father, how he did cry ! and the minister, he was obliged to stop once, and put down the book to wipe his eyes. He said it was awful to see two such young things going out into the wide world, so left to themselves like--but he was not against it, for all that ; and John, he cried too. The Rector told father he had never seen so many people crying at a wedding in all his ministry. Well, it was a sad day to us all ; now that I was married to John, and was sure I was not going to lose him,

it almost broke my heart to see father take on so, and to look round at the chairs and tables, and the dresser I had cleaned so many times, and the plates, and jugs, and cups I took such pride to set in order, and the strings of birds' eggs as I had hung over the chimney-piece, with two peacock's feathers John and I had picked up in the Squire's park, and the sweet-brier we had planted when we were children, and which grew up quite tall by the house. Ah, sure, it seems all as plain before me as if it was yesterday. Father sat with his hands on the top of his stick, and his chin resting on his hands, looking at the fire, and he took little notice of any of us. My step-mother, she was bustling about, and seemed to wish to do all she could for us the last day.

“ Next morning, Thursday, we parted from father, and brothers, and sisters, and all, and we got on the top of the coach, and we went off so fast, it made me quite dizzy as it were. We got to Liverpool, Friday evening; I seemed as though I was lost in that great busy place, but, whenever John saw me begin to look sad or frightened, he thanked me so for

coming along with him, that I felt I cared for nothing as long as he was contented.

“On the Saturday we got all the things they said we must take in the ship with us, for there are shops as sell every thing ready to hand. And Sunday we went to church for the first time together as man and wife, and for the last time together in our own country. As we came out of the church-door, John said to me, ‘Milly, I am glad we have been able to go to church together once more in Old England; we don’t know what places of worship there may be in this new country. But we can read our Bible wherever we go.’

“The vessel was to sail Monday, just one week from the day John surprised us so as I was making our own little kitchen tidy at home. We were all on board ship early in the morning. To be sure, how frightened I was; but I had made up my mind not to be down-hearted, and I bore up against it all. We had a good passage, and, as soon as we had got our little matters safe on shore, we set out to look for John’s brother, who kept

a shop for seeds and such like ; we soon found the shop, but it was a sad time for us when we got there. But la, Miss—there's the clock striking twelve, and you not in bed. What will your mamma say to me for keeping you awake with my old woman's tales? but it is not often I talk of by-gone days, and when once I begin I hardly know how to stop."

## CHAPTER II.

What spirit e'er so gentle shall be found,  
So softly reared in humble privacy ;  
What form so fragile on wide earth's vast round,  
Shrinking from every blast beneath the sky,  
That will not brave severest destiny,  
Bear uncomplaining, want and cruel wrong,  
And look on danger with unblenching eye,  
If love have made that gentle spirit strong,  
Love, pure, approved by Heav'n, led that frail form along.

*Manuscript Poems.*

LUCY would not hear of going to bed till she had heard the rest of Milly's adventures.

“ You must go on, nurse. I cannot let you stop—you know I love any story, and you know I love you, and so you may guess how much I must be interested.”

“ You are very good, Miss, to say so. Mine's a very plain homely tale, but you

always was a kind young lady, and somehow, when I have got over the first talking about my poor husband, and all our troubles, I can't say but there is a kind of pleasure, like, in going over it all again."

"Now there's a good nurse, mind you tell me every thing. What had happened when you got to your brother-in-law's?"

"Ah! poor man! he was dead -- dead and buried. He died just three weeks after he wrote to John; and, though the widow kept on the shop, she could not do for us as he would have done. Poor soul! she was left with five young children, and she was almost beside herself with care and trouble. However, she took us in, and told us we should not have to pay for lodging while we stayed there, but she could not afford to keep us. She told John who was the proper person to apply to, to get what they call a grant of land, and he went next day to see about it, for he was loth to be a burthen to the poor widow.

"He found he could not get any garden, nor any land near the town, but he must go a

great way off to the back woods, where there were new settlers, and where he must cut down the trees, and dig up the soil fresh for himself. This was a great disappointment, and he lost a deal of time trying if he could not get something that would suit better. But you see, ma'am, every thing goes by interest in one country just like another ; and now his brother was gone he had nobody to put in a good word for him, and he found there was no use in haggling on any longer. So he set about buying the goods, and the tools which they said were quite necessary for a new settler, and by the time he had got his grant of land, and had bought his things, all our money was pretty well gone, and I was not in a way to be much of a help to him. Poor John ! He said he would not have me begin a long journey in this condition, and when I got to the end of it have no roof over my head, and be in a lonesome place with nobody to do for me when the time of my trouble came. My sister-in-law was very good, and she promised to take care of me. She got me needlework, and I could earn enough for my



own keep ; and so John set off all alone to this land that was to be his. He was to get the trees felled, and a log-house built, and some ground trenched, and every thing quite comfortable in a manner ; and he was to come back for me in the spring. I did not half like this. As long as I was with him I felt as if I could do any thing ; but when he was gone, I don't know how it was, but I had no spirit to any thing. But he would not let me go. He said, ' No ! he had told father I should be treated tenderly, and he would never let me be worse off than the very gipsies in Old England.'

“ The autumn seemed very long to me ; but I worked hard, and earned enough to get every thing nice for my baby, and to have a few household things ready to take with me when the spring came. After my child was born, I began to grow quite happy with thinking how pleased John would be to see it. I had got together all my little goods, and had packed them up, and I was waiting every day for him to come. I thought every step I heard at the door might be him ; for there was

no post in those outlandish parts, and I had only heard from him twice by a private hand since he went. One day I was startled by hearing a strange voice ask for me. It was not John, I knew well enough ; and there came such a fright over me I could not answer, nor I could not go to the door. Though I was always wishing John would come, and wondering he did not, yet it never before came into my head to be frightened, I felt so sure he would come at last ; but I don't know how it was, I thought now there was something bad in store for me.

“ My sister-in-law went to the door, and she brought me up a letter. It was in his own hand-writing. But when I had got it, I could hardly read it, I was in such a hurry, and all over in such a tremble. However, it told me he had been very ill ; he had had a bad rheumatic fever, and was not able to come for me yet ; but he was getting better, and hoped to be able to set off before summer came. I made up my mind directly what I would do—to set off the next day as ever came, and go to him. So I went down-stairs to the man as brought

me the letter, and I asked him which was the road, and what were the names of the places I had to go through, and how I was to find out his settlement. I was a pretty middling scholar, so I wrote it all down from his mouth. That night I packed up my bundle, and I sold the linen and things I had bought, for I could not carry them, and I knew I should want the money. My sister-in-law lent me a little she was able to spare, and next morning I set out. I reckoned I could walk fifteen miles a-day, and that as it was three hundred miles up the country, it would take me about three weeks to get to him. I was very tired the first day, for I had to carry my bundle on my back, and my child in my arms; but I did not care. I thought so of getting to John, I hardly knew that I was tired. I found a decent little inn, and a civil woman, who made me pretty comfortable that night, and I had nothing to complain of for several days more; but after a week or thereabouts, the country was very bare, and there were but few houses to be seen. One day I had to walk better than twenty miles before I could get taken in, and after all

the place was a miserable hovel, and the woman as kept it was so old, and dirty, and smoky, and she spoke so short to me, and looked at me so sharp, that I felt frightened, and almost sorry, when, after a little haggling, she let me into the hut. It seemed to belong to her ; but some men who came in after me, ordered her about as if they were masters of her and all she had ; and she did not think of refusing them any thing, and they swore at her terribly, and made themselves quite at home. I had got away into the inner-room when I saw them coming, and I never went back into the kitchen. The old woman seemed no ways anxious that I should. I begged her to let me lie down, and she said I might do as I would ; so I tried to get some rest ; but I could see these men through the chinks of the logs, and I could hear most of what they said. They drank, and they sang, and by their way of talking, I think they led a rough sort of robber-like life ; but I could not half understand what they said. At last they rolled themselves up on the floor, and went to sleep, and I went to sleep too. All my little stock of money, which

was getting very low, but which was my only dependence for reaching my poor husband, was under my pillow, and I resolved I would not part with it if I could help it. In the middle of the night my child began to cry; I felt sure these strange men would wake and rob me, and perhaps murder me too. I heard one move, and I could see him sit up, rub his eyes, stretch himself, and he wondered what the noise could be; but I managed to pacify the child, and he settled himself again. To be sure, I was glad when I heard him breathe quite hard! I did not sleep any more that night, and by day-break, the hunters (for they had guns, and powder-pouches, and bags—so I suppose they were hunters,) were astir, and left the hut. I asked the old woman who they were, and which way they were likely to take; but she did not like being questioned, and so, when I thought they had been gone about an hour, I set out again on my lonesome journey.

“That day the road lay through a great forest of very tall trees, taller than any trees we have here. I never did feel so lonesome

before ; there was not a creature to be seen anywhere, and the tall trees made the road so dreary, and it was all dark and hollow each side ; for in those great woods the trees stand clear of each other, and there is no under-wood, nor bushes, nor briers, but the boles go up straight, and the branches meet at top, and one may go miles and miles, and never see the blue sky over one's head. There was no telling what might come out from those dismal hollows, and I kept looking round every minute, and trying to see into them, but 'twas impossible : I could see the trunks of the trees for a little way, and then 'twas all as black as night. It made one feel so alone, and yet one did not know what might be near one ; and I thought what would become of me if I was benighted in this dreary place, and I thought of the wild Indians, and of the bears, and of my poor innocent babe ; but then I thought again of my husband on his sick-bed, and I took courage.

“ It was past the middle of the day, and the sun had sunk some way below those tall dark trees, when I sat down to rest myself, and

to drink from a clear stream by the roadside. I was wondering how much farther it could be to the end of the forest, where I had been told I should find something of a decent hut, when I was startled at hearing voices and the report of a gun; and presently three of the men who had passed the night in the old woman's hovel came out from among the gloomy trees on the other side.

“ They looked surprised to see me, and came straight up to me. I don't know how it was, but when the time came I did not seem so timid as I thought I should. I remembered how poor I was, and it could not be no object to anybody to rob me, and I knew I was doing my duty in going to my husband, and I thought God would protect me. I sat quite still, and did not tremble nor shake. One of them asked me how I came there? so I told him the truth, and spoke quite civil, and yet, as it were, bold and steady, that I was walking from Halifax to my husband at the far settlement. So another of the men said, quite sharp—‘ If

you have got a husband, he had better keep a sharper look-out after such a tight lass as you are.'

"The first man said — 'You have got a long journey before you, my girl.'

"And I answered, 'Yes, Sir ; but I have got safe through more than half of it, and I hope, with the blessing of God, to get safe through the rest of it to my husband, to nurse him in his illness.'

" 'Oh ! he's ill, that's it,' said the second.

" 'Well, you can't be travelling all this way without money,' says the third, who had not spoken yet.

" 'Come, come, poor girl,' interrupted the first, and gave a wink to the last speaker, 'we won't hinder your journey any longer : you had better push on, or you'll be in the dark.' And he took the other by the arm, and he seemed to persuade them both to go away ; and when I saw them go off into the woods again, I thanked God for his goodness, and thought he was indeed a Father to the fatherless, and that he never did desert them



as put their trust in Him in the time of their need.

“ I hugged my baby close, and quite forgot how tired I had been a little while before, and walked and ran till it was nearly dark, when the trees grew thinner, and I thought I could see lights glimmer in the distance. I made all the haste I could, and at last I got to a small settlement of half a dozen log-houses. I stopped at the first door, and I never felt so happy as when I saw a light, and a fire, and a woman’s face again. She had a child in her arms too, and I felt quite safe.

“ Next day I was very tired, and the woman at the little inn wished me to stay all day, and rest myself; but when I was walking and toiling, I did not feel so much about John: the moment I was still, I thought how ill he might be, and I could not bear to keep quiet. Besides, the woman’s husband was going part of the same road, to make a bargain about some furs; so he kept me company through the rest of the forest, and he begged the fur-merchants, as he came to

speak to, that they would see me safe to the village where I was to stop that night. This day my baby began to grow fretful, and no wonder, for, though I did the best I could for it, 'twas next to impossible to get anything fit for a baby at the places I stopped at, and I lived so hard myself that I made but a poor nurse.

“My shoes were quite worn out, and my feet were so sore, I thought I must afford myself a pair of shoes, as I should not have another opportunity. They were very dear, for everything was brought from Halifax. I was sorry afterwards I did not make shift without them. Next morning my baby was so ill I went to the doctor, for there was a doctor there, and they said he was the only real doctor anywhere for miles and miles. He gave me something as quieted the child, but, when I had paid for this too, my purse was so low, I began to fear I should not have enough to buy me any thing to eat after the two next days; and as for begging,—I had never been brought up to think of such a thing. I touched nothing but the coarsest and cheapest food

I could get, and drank nothing but cold water, and I walked farther each day, to get sooner to the end of my journey. I was almost worn out, and, (as I reckoned,) I had still three days' travelling between me and my husband when I paid away my last farthing. I scarcely hoped ever to reach him, but I walked on till I got to a small settlement, and then I sat down by the way-side, and thought what should I do?

“ I could not help crying, and thinking what would father say if he could see me then; and it hurt me so! for I knew he would feel angry with John, and fancy it was through him his child was brought into such trouble, and forced to beg her bread—for there was no help for it—if I wished to see my husband, and not to let my baby die, I must that night, ask charity of strangers. So I knocked at the nearest door, and I told my story, and asked for food and lodging. I have often thought a mother, with her infant in her arms, has something which goes to the hearts of their fellow-creatures, if they have any kindness left in them. I'm sure I never

see a poor beggar-woman with a baby, at the door, but I think of myself that weary night, and I never have the heart to send them away without some little trifle, though, maybe, I'm often imposed upon.

“ Well ! the man as opened the door took pity upon us directly, and bade me come in and sit by the fire. His daughter, a nice girl of fourteen, brought us some potatoes and some milk, and let me share her bed. They would have given me enough to pay my way for the next two days, if they had had it to give ; but I was forced to ask charity again that night, but it did not seem to give me such a choking in the throat as it did the first time ; and I thought how soon we lose our spirit when we get low in the world, and how easy it is to go on from bad to worse ! The next night I hoped to get to my husband. They told me to keep along the banks of a great river on my left, where there was something of a path, but 'twas so overgrown with the long rank grass, 'twas not easy to find. The new settlement was near the river-side, for the trees, which the

settlers cut some way higher up, drifted down the river till they came to this place, where the ground was particular rich, and then they pulled them ashore, and built themselves log houses. There were about seven families together, as they told me, and my husband's house was the farthest but one. How my poor heart did beat all the way I went ; I longed so to get there, and I dreaded it so too. I walked on and on, and still I saw no people, nor no huts, nor no fields, and I began to think I must have come wrong, for, though it was all open and flat, I could not see very far before me, for the grass was long, and the rushes very tall, sometimes, by the river-side. Of all the day's journeys I had come, this did seem to me the longest ; but I suppose 'twas only because I was so impatient to get to the end of it. I looked at the sun, and it was not above half way down. Just then there was a rise in the road, and I could see some smoke, and the roofs of some low huts, and some little patches of ground that were cultivated, and I strained my eyes to try and make out the last but one ; I don't know

how I got over the ground, but I soon did reach the first house, and I saw a child at play, and I asked him which was John Roberts's. I could hardly breathe while he answered, 'He lives out yonder.' He lives! and when I heard him say that, I first knew I had been afraid of never seeing John again.

"I ran as well as I could to the hut. It looked wretched and half finished; the door was ajar—I pushed it open—there was nobody in the kitchen—I heard no noise—I listened—I did not dare step on. Just then my child cried, and a voice from within said, in a hollow tone, 'Who's there?' I ran into the bed-room, and there lay my husband, sick, pale, and weak, but it was my husband alive, and all seemed well."

"Oh, nurse," exclaimed Lucy, "I never heard any thing half so interesting in my life. Poor souls! and how was your husband? He got well?"

"Yes, Miss, he did get well after a time. He fretted so much to think he could not go for me, that it had kept him back, and he had nobody to make him any thing nice, nor

to do for him; leastways not to do for him as I could, though the neighbours looked in now and then and made his bed, and boiled his potatoes for him, and such like. Sure! how overjoyed he was to see me, and how pleased he was to see the babe. He soon began to mend, and then he was so vexed to think he had not been able to get the place to rights a bit before I came.

“The fence outside was all broken down, and the garden was only half-planted; but I had not been there a fortnight before I got it all to look quite different. I cleaned up the house, and settled the few things he had got in it, and I helped him to mend the fence, and he was soon able to dig again, and the things grow very quick in that rich soil, and our house and garden were quite decent, and we were so glad to be together again, that we did not see no faults in any thing.

“In the winter-time John had been lucky in shooting, and had sold some furs for enough to buy him a cow, and some chickens; and then, being a pretty middling gardener, he had

helped his neighbours, and put them in the way to crop their gardens as they should be; and most of them gave him a trifle, some one thing and some another, so that now he was pretty well, and I was there to keep matters tidy, we were very comfortable. The winter was cold and long, and in the spring he had another touch of that nasty fever, as was so common in them low swampy grounds. In the summer I had my Betsy—you know my Betsy, as is married to Farmer Crofts?—some of the neighbours were very kind to me, and I got over it pretty well. Of a Sunday we used to read our Bible together, and think how true John's saying was, when we came out of church at Liverpool, that there was no knowing what places of worship we might find where we were going to. But John often said all places might be made places of worship if one had but the mind to it, whether it was a real church, or the tall, dark, still woods, or the damp wide savannah, or our own log-hut; and so, I hope, when we read our prayers there, it



did us as much good as if there had been a minister and a pulpit, and all as it should be.

“I believe I was too happy then for it to last. With the spring came the rheumatic fever again, and my poor husband was quite laid up. He could not do any thing, and he fretted so to think his land was not trenched, nor any thing seen to! and, what with the children, and the house, and the cow, and the things out of doors, and poor John to nurse, I had more than one pair of hands could well do. This would not have signified if John had but mended when the summer came, but he got worse and worse. He was so weak, and he suffered a deal of pain, and there was no doctor. Then I did wish we had never left England, and I thought it would have been better we should both have worked and laboured in our own country, till we had got old, and earned enough to marry upon. But we did for the best; and if John was so set upon coming, even without me, why, then, it was best I came too, for

he had some one to do for him. It was all written, I suppose; and perhaps 'twas for our good—but this was hard, very hard to bear.

“ One evening I had got the children off to sleep, and I had taken my bit of work, and was sitting by John’s bedside, when he said to me—

“ ‘ Milly, you must not stay here when I am gone. If you sell all the little matters we have got together here, you ’ll have enough to pay your journey to Halifax, and your passage home too, as I reckon. Your father will be good to you, I think—I hope. Tell him I meant for the best when I persuaded you to come.’

“ Oh, Miss Lucy, I never thought to see that day: I had always hoped I should have been the first to go. But it pleased God otherwise.”

The poor old woman sat with her apron to her eyes, in quiet, silent tears. Lucy took one of her withered hands, and pressing it between her own, told her, with tears in her eyes, how much she felt for her, and how much she admired her husband’s kind and

manly character. She found this was the chord to which, after so many years, the old nurse's heart still vibrated.

"Yes, Miss Lucy," and her faded eyes flashed with almost youthful brightness; "He was the kindest-hearted, the truest-hearted, and the bravest-hearted man as ever lived. He feared nothing, but to do wrong, and to part with me. His thoughts were always on me; and when he was taken, the last words he ever spoke were, 'my own Milly,' and the last look he ever gave was for me, and my hand felt the last pressure his ever gave."

Lucy's tears flowed fast. She had read many novels, but the fictitious woes of their heroines did not seem to her half so touching as her old nurse's plain story.

"Well, Miss Lucy, I buried him there; he lies by the banks of that great river, and there's the roaring sea, and miles and miles of dreary land between me and my poor John; and, what's more, when I die, we shan't lie near each other; that frets me sadly sometimes; but he told me to come home, and

so, Miss, I could not do no other. I thought when I turned my back on the log-hut, where we had passed some such happy days together, and when I passed by the place where he was buried, at the other end of the settlement, I thought my heart must have broke ; and, if it had not been for the children, I should have thought it a mercy if it had.

“ There was some people going to Halifax, and I travelled with them. I fancied myself in trouble when I went that road before, but now I thought how happy I was then, for I was going to see my husband's face again. But God is very merciful, he never gives us more than we can bear. I bore it all, and I got to Halifax, and I went to my sister-in-law. She was a kind woman, and she was sorry for me, for she knew what it was to be a widow. I took my passage on board a vessel for England, and I and my two children left America. Though my husband's grave was so far up the country, I felt, when I left the land, as if I was more parted from him than ever. But 'twas on board ship that I learned to be thankful

to God for what was left, and not to grieve too much for any of his creatures. My little boy sickened and died, and he was not buried, decently buried in the earth, but my poor child was thrown into the sea. I could not get over that for a long time. It did seem so unnatural like. But I learned then never to think myself so low, but what God might afflict me more, and I learned to be grateful for my Betsy. And she has been a blessing to me—a kind and a dutiful girl—and one as will never let her old mother come to want, as she gets in years.”

“My poor, dear nurse,” exclaimed Lucy, “I can’t bear to think I should ever have been a naughty pettish child, and have plagued and worried you when I was little, and you, with all these heavy afflictions on your mind.”

“Lord bless your sweet heart! you never plagued me; and, as for your little vagaries, I believe they made me love you all the better.”

## CHAPTER III.

“ Il faut très peu de fond pour la politesse dans les manières : il en faut beaucoup pour celle de l'esprit.”

LA BRUYERE.

THIS simple history of such interesting feelings made Lucy reflect a good deal. She looked back on her sisters' courtships and weddings, and could not persuade herself they had either felt or inspired sentiments half so noble, or so disinterested, as John's and Milly's; and she resolved, in her own mind, she would never marry unless she was really in love—very much in love.

It seldom happens that people, on the subject of matrimony, act according to the plan they have proposed to themselves. The girl who settles she will marry a tall dark

man, is sure to marry a little fair man; the man who resolves he will have a meek and gentle wife, is caught by some wild coquette, to whom he tamely submits for the sake of a quiet life. So the young lady, who has made up her mind that love is folly, and that, if she repents, it shall be in a coach and six, runs away with a pennyless Captain; and Lucy, though extremely anxious to emulate Milly, never found the object to which she could thus devote herself, and ended by repenting in a coach and six.

In the empty dandies and lounging officers who frequented L——, the watering-place near which Colonel Heckfield's small property was situated, she saw nothing superior to Captain Langley, or to Sir Charles Selcourt; and Nurse Roberts had decidedly not thought Sophy or Lizzy in love with either. But she was very young, and she had plenty of time to look about her. Her three elder sisters were married; her two younger ones had not yet emerged from the school-room; her numerous brothers looked on her as the pet and the beauty of the family, and they all

reckoned she was to captivate something brilliant in the way of a *parti*. There was a floating wish in her mind to be heroically devoted, as, through her homely language, she perceived Milly Roberts had been, and yet a desire not to disappoint the expectations of father, mother, brothers, sisters, and governess.

All their acquaintances exclaimed at the good fortune of the Heckfields.

“They did not know how Mrs. Heckfield managed it, but her daughters no sooner appeared than they were snapped up—they were pretty, certainly. Harriet, the eldest, was a fine rosy girl, but she never had an air of fashion. Lizzy had pretty eyes and fine teeth, but her features were decidedly bad. Sophy had a beautiful figure, but she was so pale!” (Sir Charles Selcourt thought that a little rouge would make her look exceedingly well at the head of his table.) Lucy was the beauty, so they supposed she looked very high.

About this time Lord Montreville came to the watering-place of L—. He had but lately succeeded to the title of his elder bro-



ther ; having passed through the career of a gallant gay Lothario, with the reputation of having been the most irresistible, and the most discreet, but the most general of lovers.

As the charming, but half-ruined Lord Arthur Stansfeld, he had been safe from the machinations of mammas ; but the hearts of the daughters had not been safe from his. Secure in the impossibility of his being considered as an eligible *parti* for the very lovely and high-born beauties who alone could attract his notice, he had not feared to pay such attentions as generally excited a preference on the part of the young ladies. As to the married women, whose names had been coupled with his, in a manner more gratifying to his vanity than to their honour, the list would be painfully long. Still he had avoided any *éclat*, and no one could accuse him of betraying, by a word or a look, any consciousness of his own powers of attraction. On the contrary, he preserved enough of the tone of the *vieille cour* to make his manner respectful and devoted, and he had acquired enough of the ease of the present day to pre-

vent its being the least formal. He had arrived at that age when, if he had not been so good-looking, so attentive to his dress, so lively in society, he would have been called by the young an old man ; but, as it was, he was only called an agreeable man, without any reference being made to the number of years that had passed over his head. Having now succeeded to the family title and estates, he began for the first time to think seriously of marriage. But every charm which had formerly proved attractive to him now filled him with alarm. He had had every opportunity of becoming acquainted with the foibles and the faults of ladies of fashion, and none of estimating their good qualities. He regarded with suspicion style, manner, vivacity, talents, grace ; and he resolved to choose some young, unsophisticated creature whom he could mould according to his own views, and who should be as unlike as possible to all those with whom he had had any former connexion.

He was accidentally introduced to Lucy, and she appeared to him precisely the thing of which he was in search. She was decidedly

very pretty, and lacked nothing but what a week's tuition would give, to have *un air distingué*. Her head was small—it was naturally well put on. Her figure was slender, her foot was not large; and, though her hands were a little red, they were well-shaped. Some almond-paste, the best shoemaker, and Mademoiselle Hyacinthe, would set all quite right. He thought he should not alter the style of her coëffure. The back of her head was so Grecian in its contour, she might venture upon her own simple twist and long ringlets.

Having thus made up his mind, he proceeded to ingratiate himself with the family. There was a public ball at the concert-rooms, and thither he went.

He never danced: he knew he was too old, and he never affected youth. But, when Lucy was dancing, she often found his large, intelligent, expressive eyes fixed on her from beneath the very dark eyebrows which shaded them, without giving them any look of harshness. She felt flattered, without being distressed, for the expression was that of kindly pleasure in seeing a lovely young woman in-

nocently gay. The gaze expressed that he did think her lovely, though it contained nothing that could alarm the most shrinking modesty.

In the course of the evening he conversed a good deal with Mrs. Heckfield, in whose common-place remarks he seemed to find much pith and substance.

Between the dances, when Lucy returned to her mother, he rose to give her his seat, not as if he was merely doing an act of common courtesy, but as if it afforded him real heart-felt pleasure to be of any possible use to her, and it was with kindness, rather than gallantry, that he flew to fetch her some tea, or some lemonade.

He handed Mrs. Heckfield to supper, and sat between her and Lucy, who found her partner quite dull and stupid, in comparison with this very agreeable new acquaintance. He did not talk much ; he said nothing which she could afterwards remember as being either clever or amusing. But he had a manner of listening with a deferential air, his eyes fixed with attention on the speaker, while

his countenance seemed to say, the remark made was new and luminous, something which had never struck him before, so that people believed themselves delighted with him, while, in truth, they were delighted with themselves.

In a cabinet-council, Colonel and Mrs. Heckfield agreed that, as he appeared to find so much pleasure in their society, they might venture to ask Lord Montreville to dinner. But who to invite to meet him? That was a question of much consideration. The Bexleighs were agreeable, but they were so numerous, that it would make the party dull to have so many of one family. It is dreadful if members of the same household get near each other; they cannot seize that moment for talking of family affairs, neither can they make conversation like strangers.

“Let us have the Thompsons, my dear,” said the Colonel.

“La! Colonel Heckfield! Mrs. Thompson! so fat and vulgar, and Mr. Thompson, so silent, unless you talk of stocks or Consols.”

“ Well, then, Colonel Danby and his daughter.”

“ They will do pretty well; but I was thinking of Mrs. Haughtville, who, you know, has always lived in the first circles.”

“ What! that deaf old woman? I can’t see of what use she can be.”

“ Why, my dear, it won’t do to ask just common-place country neighbours. We must get somebody Lord Montreville is likely to know.”

“ Very true! And then my friend Dolby, he knows every body, and can talk thirteen to the dozen.”

“ He knows every body who has been in India, but I very much suspect he does not know any body that Lord Montreville would think any body,” answered the lady, who never could endure her husband’s jolly friend, who certainly did eat, drink, talk, and laugh, thirteen to the dozen, but who, she not unwisely thought, would be a very bad ingredient in this refined party; “ Surely Sir James Ashgrove, the member for the county, would be a

better person ; we can give him a bed, you know."

" Very well — Ashgrove is a good fellow, and a sensible fellow, but he never gives you much of his conversation, unless you talk of the last division in Parliament, and then he will tell you which way every member voted, and the reasons of his vote into the bargain."

" But he is a man of good birth and good connexions, and quite a friend of the family besides ; James's godfather and all."

" Then, if we ask our good parson and his two daughters, we shall have quite enough. I don't like a great let-off ; it is much best to take matters quietly."

" Good heavens, Colonel Heckfield ! you cannot be in earnest. What ! that old proser, who makes a comma between every word, and a full stop nowhere ! and those two Misses, one as old as the hills, and the other as giggling a girl as ever I saw. Besides, Lucy and she will get laughing and gossiping together, and Lucy never appears to advantage when Bell Stopford is with her."

“ Whom had we best have then, my love ? ” responded the Colonel, who began to be weary of the discussion.

“ Why, first of all, Mrs. Haughtville,” answered Mrs. Heckfield, who had long ago prepared her list in her mind, “ and Sir James Ashgrove, (as *you* wish,) and young Mr. Lyon, Lord Petersfield’s nephew, and Sir Alan Byway, the great traveller, and Miss Pennefeather, who wrote those sweet novels ; she is quite the lion of these parts, and people of fashion like to meet a genius ; and then, my dear, I thought of asking Lord and Lady Bodlington.”

“ Mercy upon us, wife ! why I don’t know them by sight.”

“ But I do, Colonel Heckfield, and a sweet woman she is. I was introduced to her at the ball the other night, and it would be but civil to ask them to dinner.”

“ I think it would be much better to have Mr. Denby and his nice daughter. But it is all the same to me ; I don’t like running after fine folks, who care not a rush for us, that’s all.”



“ Well, if Lord and Lady Bodlington cannot come, then we will ask the Denbys. But I really am half pledged to ask them, for Lady Bodlington said the other night she heard I had the prettiest green-house in the world : and I said I hoped to have the pleasure of showing it to her.”

“ But we do not dine in the green-house ?”

“ I assure you, my love, I understand these little matters better than you do, and it would seem quite marked if we did not ask the Bodlingtons.”

Colonel Heckfield did not quite understand what would seem marked, but he acquiesced.

The distinguished personages mentioned by Mrs. Heckfield proved propitious, with the exception of Sir Alan Byway, whose place was filled, though most inadequately filled, by a young shy lordling, who was at a private tutor's in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Heckfield preferred him on account of his name, to the Indian friend Dolby, whom Colonel Heckfield, on the secession of the loquacious traveller, made another attempt to insert.

The eventful day arrived. Mrs. Heckfield,

in her secret soul, was in a great fuss, though she maintained a tolerably placid exterior; she was so afraid, after all her pains to exclude any unworthy guests, that the party might prove dull, or not *bien assorti*. Colonel Heckfield was really composed and easy: he did not like seeking great people, but, if they fell in his way, they did not annoy him. The place, though small, was pretty; the house was *bien montée*; there was nothing to be ashamed of, and he did not see how it could much signify whether one, out of the many pleasant, cheerful dinners, which had taken place under his hospitable roof, proved, or did not prove, the quintessence of perfection.

Not so Mrs. Heckfield. She had settled that, on the impression made that day, depended the future fate of Lucy. When she let herself alone, she was a pleasing, popular woman; but on this occasion, she wished to be more elegant and well-bred than usual. Mrs. Haughtville being rather deaf, could not hear a word she said; and, as Mrs. Heckfield would not commit the vulgarity of speaking loud, every word they addressed to each

other, might have figured very well in the game of cross questions and crooked answers. Lady Bodlington was a good-humoured very insipid little woman ! Lord Bodlington the most common-place man imaginable. Mr. Lyon was an empty dandy, and he was unfortunately seated next to Miss Pennefeather, whom he regarded with horror, fear, detestation, and contempt, as a blue—and, worse than all, a country blue ! Miss Pennefeather, in a yellow toque and red gown, sate up, waiting to be drawn out—but—she waited in vain. The fashionably low tone of voice in which the mistress of the mansion spoke, and her studied desire to be perfectly well-bred, communicated a *gêne* and formality to the whole party, which, re-acting upon the suffering hostess, would have made the evening one of unmitigated pain to herself, and of unmitigated bore to her company, if Lord Montreville's tact and good-breeding had not come to the relief of all parties.

He asked Miss Pennefeather some questions upon modern literature, which gave her an opportunity of pouring forth her stores of in-

formation into the ears of the loathing dandy. He made a remark concerning the number of members who had paired off upon the last important division in the last session of Parliament, and Sir James Ashgrove was in his element. He informed Lady Bodlington what was the proper name for that species of sable of which her boa was composed, and she became eloquent to prove that, whatever its name, it was of the most approved sort—in Paris at least—whatever it might be in Russia. He told young Lord Slenderdale, he ought to look at Captain Charles Heckfield's brown mare, for she was the cleverest hack he had seen for a long time; and the two young men soon found themselves able to speak. He complimented Colonel Heckfield on his wines, and Mrs. Heckfield on the beautiful china of which the dinner-service was composed: and he told her, in a friendly confidential manner, the only place where such rare china could be matched. By degrees the conversation became general, and then he listened to each, so as to make each person—

each lady at least, believe herself an object of interest and attention to him.

Mrs. Heckfield felt quite at her ease concerning the fate of her dinner, and perfectly intimate with Lord Montreville, but not quite happy about Lucy ; who, since the first awful silence had given way to a comfortable universal clatter, had grown so merry with her brother and Lord Slenderdale, that Mrs. Heckfield felt convinced Lord Montreville would set her down in his mind as a missish hoyden, and entirely dismiss her from his thoughts. In vain were sundry maternal glances levelled at poor Lucy—knittings of the eyebrows (suddenly smoothed and converted into sweet smiles if any one looked her way), all were wasted on the unconscious girl, who, in the gaiety of her heart, continued to laugh and to talk till she was on the verge of laughing a little too loud, and, as Mrs. Heckfield thought, of losing a Marquisate.

But she was mistaken. Lord Montreville knew the sex well, and he saw that it was an innocent, gay, natural laugh—that there

was neither freedom nor coquetry in her merriment; he knew how quickly women catch the tone of good society, and he still thought she would do.

Mrs. Heckfield hastened the signal for the departure of the ladies, in consequence of Lucy's ill-timed mirth, and they all sailed out, Lady Bodlington first, the Honourable Mrs. Haughtville next, Miss Pennefeather followed after, and Mrs. Heckfield was able quietly, but angrily, to whisper to Lucy, "that she giggled just as if Bell Stopford had been with her."

## CHAPTER IV.

Il n'est pas bien honnête, et pour beaucoup de causes,  
Qu'une femme étudie et sache tant de choses.  
Former aux bonnes mœurs l'esprit de ses enfans,  
Faire aller son ménage, avoir l'œil sur ses gens,  
Et régler la dépense avec économie,  
Doit être son étude et sa philosophie.  
Nos pères sur ce point étaient gens bien sensés,  
Qui disaient qu'une femme en sait toujours assez  
Quand la capacité de son esprit se hausse  
À connaître un pourpoint d'avec un haut de chausse.  
Les leurs ne lisaient point, mais elles vivaient bien,  
Leurs ménages étaient tout leur docte entretien ;  
Et leurs livres, un dé, du fil, et des aiguilles,  
Dont elles travaillaient au trousseau de leurs filles.  
Les femmes d'à présent sont bien loin de ces mœurs,  
Elles veulent écrire, et devenir auteurs. MOLIERE.

THERE is no moment more trying to the mistress of a house than that in which the ladies first gather round the fire when they leave the dining-room. If a silence ensues,

or if the conversation is begun in too low a tone of voice, that voiceless utterance which denotes and produces shyness, the die is cast—the character of the evening is stamped!

Unfortunately Mrs. Heckfield, in her anxiety to be attentive, just as the ladies were crowding round the fire, asked them if they would not “take a seat,” and was sufficiently wanting in tact to allow them to settle themselves, in something very nearly approaching a circle, and a circle some way removed from the fire.

In vain were the sofas stuffed with cushions, in vain were the ottomans as low as possible, and the arm-chairs so deep that no one under seven feet high could reach the back of them; in vain were all the tables so orthodoxly covered with snuff-boxes under glass-cases, miniatures in beautiful frames, French souvenirs with liliputian artificial flowers, annuals in every variety of binding—prose albums—poetry albums—drawing albums—china cups, and Sevres vases—Dresden ink-stands, and mother-of-pearl letter-pressers, till it was impossible to find a spot on which a cup could



be safely deposited ; all these appliances and means to boot will not produce ease if it is wanting in the mind of the hostess. From which, by the by, might be deduced the superiority of mind over matter.

Mrs. Haughtville was a fine lady, and was anxious Lady Bodlington should not labour under the erroneous impression that she was in her element with Miss Pennefeather and the Heckfields. She, therefore, took an early opportunity of asking Lady Bodlington how many Miss Heckfields there were, and whether this Miss Heckfield was older or younger than Lady Selcourt. Lady Bodlington answered truly and simply, that she did not know, as she had only met them once before at the ball. Mrs. Haughtville did not hear, and Lady Bodlington, who was straightforward and good-humoured, and did not wish to be uncivil, was quite distressed to know how to answer. Mrs. Haughtville continued to ask questions about the people present, forgetting that though she asked in a whisper, she could not hear the whispered answer.

Mrs. Heckfield, who thought if Miss Pen-

nefeather would talk, every one must be delighted with her cleverness, was occupied in leading her to subjects on which she fancied she would shine and edify her audience; but Miss Pennefeather, who had found the dandy very unsatisfactory, and was not much pleased with the *insouciance* of the ladies of fashion, and who thought herself privileged to have the sensitive pride of genius, was not so easily drawn out. Lucy, who had been daunted by her mother's remark as they left the dining-room, was meek and silent.

It was up-hill work for Mrs. Heckfield. At length she thought of some Italian views, which had lately been sent to her by her eldest son, who was on his travels.

“Have you seen these prints, Miss Pennefeather, that Henry has sent me? They are quite in your way, such an Italian scholar as you are!”

Miss Pennefeather revived; she piqued herself on her pronunciation of Italian. She looked at them with interest, read the names of each with great emphasis, scrupulously called Leghorn, Livorno, and Florence, Firenze;

and expatiated on the beauties of each place, as if she had lived there all her life.

“ I thought you had never been abroad, Miss Pennefeather ?” said Lucy timidly and simply.

“ No ! I have never been abroad, exactly,” replied Miss Pennefeather, with a slight embarrassment, but, instantly recovering, she added with enthusiasm, “ but I have heard and read so much of these hallowed spots, I feel as if I knew them perfectly ; as if I had roved with Il Petrarca, through the shady groves and by the purling streams of Valchiusa ; as if I had accompanied the great author of the Divina Commedia in his wanderings ; and I can almost fancy I had made one of that party of congenial souls in the enchanted skiff with Guido and Lappo,

E Monna Vanna, e Monna Bice poi,  
E quella sotto 'l numer delle trenta !

I never see a print of *La bella Firenze*, without thinking of her exiled poet, and,” she added with a sigh, and an upward glance, which was intended to speak volumes, “ feeling with him—

Come sa di sale  
Lo pan altrui, com'è duro calle,  
Lo scender, e'l salir per l'altrui scale."

Miss Pennefeather was poor, and her friends were extremely kind in frequently inviting her to stay at their houses, where she appeared to enjoy herself exceedingly, and gave no signs of sympathising with Dante.

"What did she say?" asked Mrs. Haughtville.

"Something about salt bread, and its being very hard to go up and down-stairs," answered the good-humoured Lady Bodlington.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Haughtville.

Miss Pennefeather cast a glance of contempt at the high-born pair, and relapsed into a dignified silence. Coffee came: that was a real blessing. Tea succeeded, which was some comfort. Mrs. Heckfield's eyes turned frequently and more frequently towards the door; still the gentlemen came not. In her despair she bade Lucy give them a little music.

"You are fond of music, I believe, Lady Bodlington."

"Oh, yes! passionately fond of music!"

answered Lady Bodlington, with a suppressed yawn, and poor Lucy seated herself at the piano-forte.

She had a pretty voice, but she was very much frightened. Miss Pennefeather was a critic, and Mrs. Haughtville looked so cold. Lady Bodlington she did not mind—she seemed good-natured, and the circumstance of her being a Viscountess, had not the same effect on Lucy's nerves as on her mother's.

She did her best, and Lady Bodlington, with a sweet smile, thanked her for that pretty Spanish air.

“It is German!” said Lucy with the *naïveté* of youth; and both felt uncomfortable. Lady Bodlington, at having made a wrong hit, Lucy, at not having pronounced her words more distinctly. Lady Bodlington should have known better than to utter any phrase of commendation which committed her, as to the language in which a young lady's song is couched. Lucy should have known better than to set her right, when she had made the mistake.

“If Miss Pennefeather would favour us!”

humbly suggested Mrs. Heckfield: "One of your own unique compositions, my dear Miss Pennefeather. Miss Pennefeather composes words, and music, and all, Mrs. Haughtville, and they are the sweetest things!"

This account of Miss Pennefeather's multifarious talents excited a slight emotion of curiosity in Mrs. Haughtville's mind, and she accordingly begged Miss Pennefeather to grant their request. Lady Bodlington was very anxious indeed; and the poetess, whose pride, though easily wounded, was, through the medium of her vanity, as easily soothed, found the two fine ladies were more intellectual, and consequently more worthy of the efforts of her genius, than she had at first imagined.

After a little bashful reluctance, she seated herself upon the round stool. She was short and thick, with a very small waist and a very full gown, and she sat extremely stiff and upright. Her arms were short, and when she meant to play *staccato*, she caught up her hands as high as her shoulders, and then she pounced down again on the affrighted notes

as a kite upon a brood of chickens. The "sweet thing" she selected for the occasion was in a German style. A love-lorn damsel who sold herself to the spirit of darkness, that she might rejoin her murdered lover's ghost in another, but not a better, world. Miss Pennefeather's nose was small, and somewhat *retroussé*; her eyes were large, black, and round, (they were her beauty,) her mouth would not have been ugly, but that it was difficult to decide where her chin ended and her throat began, so that, during the vehement and energetic passages which the nature of the subject called forth, when the head was thrown back, and the black eyes were darting their beams towards the ceiling, the double chin protruded rather beyond the natural and original one.

The gentlemen entered just as the maiden was torn away to the realms below by the infernal crew, and, having repented her of her unholy compact, was invoking beings of the upper air to her rescue. The poor pianoforte reeled under the astounding accompaniment, in its lowest bass to the deep-toned

exultation of the demons, and to the shrieks of the maiden in its highest treble; the Sappho's cheeks were suffused with the excitement of the moment, the feathers in her yellow toque were waving as rapidly as the plume of a hero in the thickest of the fight. The sight, the sounds, were awful!

The dandy reached the door—he saw—he heard—and he fled. He retreated to the hall, and hastily seizing a hat, (which, by the by, happened to be Lord Montreville's instead of his own,) and throwing around him his military cloak, he boldly sallied forth in a drizzling wet night to walk two miles to his lodgings.

“He'd brave the raging of the skies,  
But not”—Miss Pennefeather.

The other gentlemen were less easily intimidated, and made good their entrance. Lord Montreville seated himself by the side of Lucy, and, without speaking enough to be uncivil towards the performer, he contrived to make Lucy perfectly understand that he preferred her conversation, to Miss Pennefeather's singing, although he was passionately fond of



music, and should like of all things to hear her sing.

When the performance was concluded, he assured the Corinne of the evening that her composition was one which could be heard with indifference by no one. Miss Pennefeather was charmed, and asked if his Lordship was an admirer of the new style of English music, which had been introduced since the *Captive Knight* and the *Treasures of the Deep*, had made such a sensation.

“Of course you know the *Treasures of the Deep*? They tell me I have caught something of the inspired authoress’s expression.” Lord Montreville really trembled. He had heard it sung by the inspired authoress, and he hastened to avert the sacrilegious attempt, by begging for another of her own composition.

Charmed and flattered, Miss Pennefeather again burst forth in a perfectly original piece, under cover of which Lord Montreville entered into a most agreeable conversation with Lucy. His dark, lively, expressive eyes, looked at her with so much consciousness of being understood, that she immediately felt quite

intimate, and perfectly satisfied that he was as much amused as she was, by Miss Pennefeather's exhibition. These looks of mutual intelligence and amusement prevented her feeling any awe of his age or his rank, while his very age made her feel perfectly safe and innocent in immediately giving in to the intimacy which so suddenly sprang up between them. Their communication did not confine itself to a little good-humoured ridicule of the self-constituted Corinne; he had the happy knack of leading the conversation to topics interesting to the individuals with whom he conversed; and Mrs. Heckfield overheard Lucy, in the fulness of her heart, giving a detailed account of the death of a Newfoundland puppy, which was supposed to have been bit by a mad dog!

Mrs. Heckfield was in agonies: she looked unutterable things; but her looks were utterly thrown away. Lucy's heart and soul were in her subject, and her eyes were sufficiently tearful to look very bright and melting. Lord Montreville thought this extremely countrified simplicity, charming, though

he did not intend it should last for ever. He was himself a professed lover of animals, and he gave her, in return, an account of a horse who neighed when he came into the stable, and would put his nose into his pocket to find the bread he was in the habit of feeding him with.

Lucy thought him the nicest, best-natured creature she had ever met with; and Mrs. Heckfield saw her, in the midst of his story, draw her chair nearer to him, her whole mind intent upon the sensible horse. Mrs. Heckfield thought, "How improper! how forward! how vulgar! What can ail Lucy to-night?"

When the company dispersed, what was her horror to see Lucy put out her hand towards Lord Montreville, and shake hands with him cordially, heartily, and frankly; but her horror was mixed with astonishment, when Lord Montreville begged permission to call the next morning, as Miss Heckfield had promised to show him some beautiful puppies, and to allow him to select one, as he was a great dog-fancier.

"What can be the meaning of this?"

thought she, "he must be disgusted with Lucy's manners to-day! They could not have been worse if Bell Stopford had been here!"

When the last carriage had driven from the door, Mrs. Heckfield threw herself into a chair.

"Well, Lucy! I think you have done it to-day! When you knew I wished you to behave like a girl of fashion. When we had all the best company within ten miles round assembled here, just this one day, to giggle and laugh all dinner-time, and then to entertain a man of Lord Montreville's refinement and taste with your dog's death, and your puppies' birth! He must think you have been brought up in the stables, rather than in the drawing-room."

"Oh, dear mamma! I assure you he asked me all about poor dear Hector's death!"

"Asked you about Hector's death! How could he have known such a dog as Hector ever existed, if you had not begun about your own dog and your own affairs? Don't you know that egotism should be avoided in every way,

and that it is the most ill-bred thing in the world to talk of yourself and your concerns?"

"So it is, mamma;—very true. I did not mean to talk of myself, and I am sure I do not know how I fell into it: but you don't know how interested he seemed. I do not think he was bored, really: he says he is so fond of animals—just like me."

"Pooh, child!—he is a very well-bred man, and was too polite to let you feel you bored him. You must learn not to be led into pouring your own histories into people's ears."

Mrs. Heckfield forgot that at dinner she had given Lord Montreville a very long account of the manner in which she had become possessed of the china he had admired.

## CHAPTER V.

Enfin ils me mettaient à mon aise : et moi qui m'imaginai qu'il y avait tant de mystère dans la politesse des gens du monde, et qui l'avais regardé comme une science qui m'était totalement inconnue, et dont je n'avais nul principe, j'étais bien surprise de voir qu'il n'y avait rien de si particulier dans la leur, rien qui me fût si étranger ; mais seulement quelque chose de liant, d'obligeant, et d'aimable.

MARIVAUX.

LUCY went to bed uneasy at having had such bad manners, and yet not altogether mortified ; for, though she implicitly believed all her mother said of her behaviour, she did not think it had quite produced the effect she imagined upon Lord Montreville, “ for mamma did not know how good-natured he was.”

She generally chatted with Milly, as she was undressing ; and Milly, who was aware that the party of that day was one which had excited some anxiety in her mistress's bosom,

inquired of Miss Lucy "how the gentlefolks had been pleased, and whether everything was right at table."

"We were all pretty well placed, I believe; only mamma says I am not to sit so near Charles again, for, if we get near each other, we make too much noise; and Mr. Lyon did not like Miss Pennefeather at all."

"I am sorry for that, Miss; but I meant how the cross-corners did, for poor Mrs. Fussicome was in such a way! The jelly would not stand, and it looked so shocking bad when it was in the dish, that what did we do but beat up some raspberry-cream in no time, and sent it in instead; but, then, it made two reds at the cross-corners; but I should hope nobody noticed it."

"I am sure I did not, nurse, and I don't think mamma did; at least, she said nothing about it. Everything looked very nice, tell Mrs. Fussicome."

"Yes, Miss, that I will, for she has been quite put out about it; she said she could not enjoy her supper a bit, and she thought the soufflet was not quite right."

"Mamma did not say anything about it:

indeed, she saw no faults in the dinner—they were all in me. How I do wish I had not such spirits.—I mean to be so quiet and demure, and as soon as the people begin to talk to me, I forget. I do really believe Lord Montreville is very good-natured, and will not think the worse of me.”

“La! Miss, I’m sure your mamma can’t think there is any harm in talking and laughing with such an old gentleman.”

“He is not so very old, Milly,” answered Lucy, though, if Milly had not said so, she might have been the first to say it herself.

About one o’clock the next morning, Lord Montreville arrived at Rose Hill Lodge, and was surprised to find Lucy shy, reserved, timid and rather awkward. Mrs. Heckfield, anxious to efface from Lord Montreville’s mind all impressions concerning the kennel, and the stables, and the dog-hutches, led his attention to the flower-garden, which was remarkably pretty, and to her small conservatory, which was in excellent order; at the same time taking care to let him know that the disposition of the flower-beds was accord-



ing to Lucy's taste—that Lucy had arranged the vases in the manner which excited his admiration—that the training of the creepers in festoons from one tree to another, was Lucy's fancy. She pointed out a beautiful new geranium which had been named after her little “madcap Lucy ; for madcap as she is, Lord Montreville, she has a decided taste for botany and that kind of thing,” added Mrs. Heckfield, with a sweet smile at Lucy, who certainly that morning had not deserved the name of “madcap.”

Lord Montreville immediately understood the state of the case, and was well pleased : he thereby perceived that Lucy was docile, easily subdued, and easily managed. However, as his present object was to win her confidence, preparatory to attempting her heart, he alluded to Miss Heckfield's promise of a puppy of their beautiful breed of setters, and he begged to be taken to the kennel, as he was to be allowed to choose for himself. Mrs. Heckfield intreated Lord Montreville would allow her to send for the dogs—Lord Montreville insisted on not giving so much trouble ;

when the servant was seen issuing from the drawing-room windows, showing the way to Lord and Lady Bodlington, who had called to see the conservatory. Mrs. Heckfield had a fresh demand on her politeness; and, after the proper greetings, Lord Montreville whispered Lucy that she must not allow him to be cheated of his puppy—that he had quite set his heart upon seeing the whole family, and intreated her to lead the way. She was at first somewhat confused, and looked uneasily towards her mother, who was some way in advance; but she did not know how to refuse: so they proceeded through the back-yard, by the coal-hole, and the bottle-rack—through the drying-ground—past the pigsties, to a range of out-houses, where Lufra and all her family were shut up.

The moment Lucy opened the door, up jumped Lufra, to the great detriment of the pretty muslin gown which that day made its first appearance.

“ Oh, my best new gown ! ” exclaimed Lucy, “ Oh dear ! Why would mamma make me put it on ? ”

She had scarcely uttered the words, when it flashed across her why mamma had wished her to be smart and to look well — she stopped short, and blushed up to the eyes.

“ This is too *naïf*,” thought Lord Montreville; “ but *naïveté* soon dies away if it is not encouraged. Her mother wishes to catch me, I know; but the girl has no plan: I shall be able to mould her to my liking.”

A young man would have flown off upon perceiving the mother’s views; but Lord Montreville had seen them plainly from the very beginning, and it did not affect his opinion as to whether Lucy *était son fait*, or not. Because Mrs. Heckfield wished to catch him, there was no reason he should be caught; and he continued his observations of Lucy, and his calculations whether she would easily become the sort of wife he wished to have.

After a long discussion concerning the several merits and beauties of the several puppies, in which Lucy found Lord Montreville’s taste in dogs perfectly coincided with her own, the puppy was selected, and Lucy’s heart had again opened, her reserve had vanished, she

had made up her mind that, for once, mamma was wrong and she was right; that her's had been the most correct estimate of Lord Montreville's character. She asked him if he admired young donkeys. He confessed, that if he had a weakness, it was for a little baby donkey, with a shaggy forehead, and a pointed nose. Lucy's eyes sparkled at such a proof of sympathy in her companion. She proposed to show him her pet. He eagerly assented, and they proceeded through the chicken-yard to the paddock where the donkeys were grazing. The chickens expected to be fed, and all gathered round Lucy's feet; the donkeys instantly set up a most sonorous braying, and galloped to her with their uplifted heads. Lucy was amused and began to laugh, and to pat, and stroke, and pinch the dear sensible creatures, when a turn in the shrubbery walk brought Mrs. Heckfield, Lord and Lady Bodlington, and Mr. Lyon to the opposite side of the paddock, which commanded a view of Lucy and Lord Montreville. Lucy felt her cheeks glow, and her mirth subside. Her mother, who could not but know through what ignoble

paths she must have led Lord Montreville, would be more displeased than ever. She was sobered in an instant. Lord Montreville perceived the blush, and the change in her countenance, and flattered himself there was something gratifying to himself in her emotions. They retraced their steps, but Lucy was silent and abashed, and looked heartily ashamed of herself when they rejoined the party.

Lord Montreville immediately addressed Mrs. Heckfield; informed her that "Miss Heckfield, at his earnest request, had allowed him to inspect the puppies, and to select the one he fancied; and that he had a childish passion for young donkeys, which she had also most kindly indulged."

Mrs. Heckfield saw that no harm was done, and she was soothed. Lucy thought him more good-natured than ever in thus averting the storm she saw impending, and gratitude was added to cement the union of their congenial souls.

He now became a frequent visitor at Rosehill Lodge, and his manner gradually assumed more the tone of gallantry. Reports arose.

Lucy was rallied by her young friends, and began to look into her feelings.

She had seen his beautiful equipage, his four blood bays; she had seen engravings of his magnificent seat in Staffordshire, of his lovely villa near London, of his ancient castle in Wales. She was proof against the splendour of Ashdale Park, and the elegances of Beausejour, but the castle had a decided effect upon her heart. The walls were nine feet thick; there was a donjon keep, at the top of a tower nine hundred and forty-one years old; and Lord Montreville's teeth were extremely good—almost as good as Captain Langley's. From the vaults under the Caërwhwyddwth Castle subterraneous passages, to the end of which no one within the memory of man had penetrated, were supposed to extend to the ruined monastery of Caërmerwhysteddwhstgen; and then Lord Montreville was quite thin—not the least inclined to corpulency. He was older than Sir Charles Selcourt, but he was much more agreeable,—he was certainly a great deal older than Captain Langley, but then Captain Langley was not the least clever. All their

tastes agreed exactly. He was enthusiastic upon the self-same subjects,—puppies, donkeys, goslings, and Lord Byron.

Her mind was in a wavering state, when the following conversation took place between herself and Milly.

“This is poor Miss Lizzy’s birth-day, Miss, and we have all been drinking her health and happiness to-night at supper. She is twenty-two this very day.”

“And I shall be nineteen next birthday, Milly. We are all growing very old. It is almost time I should be married. How old were you when you married?”

“Nineteen, Miss Lucy.”

“Just about my age. And how old was John?”

“In his twenty-one, Miss.”

“Dear! I don’t think that was difference enough. A man ought to be a good deal older than his wife, that he may advise her, and guide her, and all that, as mamma says, when she is out of sight of her mother.”

“I can’t say, Miss. The Bible says, ‘I will make an help meet for him;’ so I sup-

pose the woman is to help the man, as well as the man to help the woman; and if they are to help one another, why I reckon they should be something of an age."

"Perhaps that may be best, nurse, where they both have to work, and where the man should be young and strong to labour for his family; but in another line, nurse,—among richer people, you know,—where there is no occasion to be strong and to work hard, it is such a thing for a giddy young girl to have a steady sensible man, who can tell her all she ought to do—a man much cleverer than herself, a person she can quite look up to."

"Maybe it is, Miss."

"And then, as mamma says, a married woman, if she is not quite ugly, is liable, you know, to have men—young men—talk to her,—talk to her a good deal,—more than they should; and then it is such a thing to have a husband who can tell her exactly whom she should talk to, and whom she should not talk to."

"But sure, Miss, I should think every woman, married or single, might know when



a gentleman said any thing as was not becoming for her to listen to."

"Yes, certainly; but mamma says that in the great world a young woman might get herself talked about just for talking all about nothing at all, to one of those fashionable dandies, and that if she has a husband who knows the world well, he will tell her just how far she may listen to such people."

"Well, my dear Miss Lucy, we poor folks don't understand about talking, and being talked about, and listening, and not listening. For my part, for as long as I have lived in this wicked world—and a wicked world it is in some ways—I never knew a young woman as was married to a young man as was the man of her heart, as ever lost her good name for all she might be affable and pleasant like with her neighbours. But the gentlefolks knows best, to be sure."

Milly was unsatisfactory: she saw what was going on in the family, and she could not like it: it was no business of her's, and she would never think of stepping out of her place. Lucy was uncomfortable. She loved Milly,

and, moreover, she had settled in her own mind to love like Milly. She longed to know what she thought of Lord Montreville, and at length she plunged into the subject.

“Don’t you think Lord Montreville is a very pleasing-looking man, Milly?”

“Yes, Miss; he looks very well for his years.”

“He is so clever you can’t think.”

“Is he, Miss?”

“And so very good-natured!”

“That is a good thing for all his servants, I am sure, Miss.”

“And for every one else who is connected with him.”

“Yes, certainly, Miss.”

“He is the most agreeable person, and loves all sorts of animals, and seems to like to have every thing about him happy.”

“Sure, Miss.”

“Do you know, Milly, I should not be very much surprised if you might some day have an opportunity of trying whether he made those around him happy or not.”

“Indeed, Miss!”

“Mamma says she is convinced he likes me very much ;” and she added, in a coaxing manner, “now what shall we do, you and I, Milly?”

“I am sure, Miss, it is just as you please.”

“Yes, I know that well enough,” answered Lucy, with a shade of pettishness in her tone ; “I can say no as well as anybody, if I please, and mamma says she would not influence my choice for the world ; but it certainly is very true what mamma says, that I am so giddy I should always be getting into scrapes if I was to marry anybody as young and as giddy as myself. It was only yesterday she was talking about it, after Lord Montreville had brought me that beautiful bouquet of orange-flowers ; and she asked me whether I had any objection in the world to him, and whether I did not think him clever, and agreeable, and good-natured, and whether there was any body else I thought more clever, or more agreeable, or more good-natured, and I am sure I can’t think of anybody just now. Lord Slenderdale and Mr. Desmond are handsomer, to be sure ; but mamma would be shocked to hear me talk about beauty

in that kind of way. It does not sound well in a girl, you know." Then, after a pause, she added. "Did you think John handsome?"

"I believe other folks called him a fine young man, but I am sure I never thought nothing at all about his looks."

"Oh!" thought Lucy, "mamma is quite right; girls should not set any value on the exterior—one should only think of the mind. Besides, Lord Montreville is still very good-looking." Presently she continued, "Did you think John very clever, Milly?"

"La! Miss, I don't know, I'm sure. The schoolmaster never said no other than that he was a very good boy at his book, but I never thought about his scholarship. That was no business of mine."

"Was John agreeable, and pleasant, amusing, you know, to talk to?"

"He was always pleasant to me, I'm sure; he never gave me a bad word, nor an unkind look in his life, and he was always very agreeable to any thing I wished; and, as to being amusing, why we always had other things to think

of, than amusing ourselves, so I can't justly say."

"Oh," thought Lucy, "he was a good creature, but evidently very stupid and dull; and Lord Montreville is so lively and agreeable!"

The result of this conversation was, that Lucy went to bed, pleased with Lord Montreville, and not quite pleased with Milly. She went to sleep and dreamed she was the Marchioness of Montreville, chaperoning her sister Emma to Almack's. People cannot prevent their dreams. "*In vino veritas.*" Likewise, in dreams, there is truth. Many a weakness, many a secret preference, which the waking thoughts would not be guilty of harbouring, have been revealed to the dreamer in visions over which he, or she, had no control. The emulator of Milly's pure, disinterested, uncompromising, uncalculating affection, would never wittingly have allowed the idea of worldly vanities and splendours to have influenced her mind; but I fear we should lower our heroine too much in the opinion of the young and ro-

mantic reader, were we to inquire too deeply into the degree in which they did influence her view of the subject.

The next morning she jokingly repeated her dream to Emma.

“ Oh, Lucy !” exclaimed Emma, “ what a charming dream ! And you know mamma says, if you marry, I may come out at seventeen, and, if you don’t, I must stay in this poky school-room till I am eighteen. You never can refuse Lord Montreville.”

## CHAPTER VI.

A' l'age où j'étais on n'a pas le courage de résister à tout le monde, je crus ce qu'on me disait tant par docilité que par persuasion ; je me laissai entraîner, je fis ce qu'on me disait, j'étais dans une émotion qui avait arrêté toutes mes pensées ; les autres décidèrent de mon sort, et je ne fus moi-même qu'une spectatrice stupide de l'engagement éternel que je pris.

MARIVAUX.

WHAT with the jests of others and her mother's counsels, both open and implied, Lucy had no doubt of Lord Montreville's intentions. The whole affair seemed only to depend upon herself. What was her surprise when at seven o'clock, instead of Lord Montreville, a note arrived, apologizing for his absence, on the plea that he had been summoned away upon business. Lucy thought lovers were to be devoted things, who were to have no business but that of gaining their lady's favour.

There was a party that day, and she saw people looked surprised at hearing Lord Montreville was gone away so suddenly, and she felt a little mortified. "I am certainly in love," she thought, "for every thing seems dull to-day. Yes, it is all a blank now he is gone; (how much is implied by the simple pronoun *he* or *she*;) just as Milly said when John was gone to the back woods, and she was left at Halifax."

The resemblance between her situation and feelings, and those of Milly, would not have been so evident to others.

Several days elapsed, and nothing was heard of Lord Montreville. His saddle-horses were seen to pass towards London with their horse-cloths packed upon their saddles, in travelling costume. Lucy thought he was certainly gone quite away, without proposing, and she felt acute pangs of mortification and disappointment. She was ready to cut out her tongue for having, of her own accord, spoken to Milly of her prospects in life, when those prospects were evidently mere conjurings of her own self-conceit; she could have beat herself for having



repeated her foolish dream to Emma, who had repeated it to Mary, who had repeated it to the governess, who had made Lucy blush more than once by her allusions to it,—she could cry at thinking how faintly she had rebutted Bell Stopford's innuendoes, and she worked herself up to a state of soreness and agitation, not unlike that which might be produced by the tender passion itself.

It is not easy to distinguish how much of the emotions on such occasions proceeds from real preference, and how much from gratified or mortified vanity. I believe it does not often fall to the lot of any one, to feel the real, pure, passion of love to the highest degree of which their nature is capable; but the combination of other, less noble passions, will produce considerable pains, pleasures, blushings, and flushings; hearts will beat, cheeks turn pale, hands shake, knees even will knock a little together, and the symptoms pass muster very well, as love, true love. If the affair ends in marriage, and the parties suit, it does as well as love, and often ends in becoming love itself. If, on the contrary, the flirtation ends, as many flirta-

tions do, these symptoms are mentally laughed at and forgotten, as having only been passing ebullitions of gratified vanity, or indignant pride; the heart is supposed, and really is, free, and ready for a real true passion whenever it may be called forth.

Lucy passed a restless and uncomfortable week—annoyed, when they were asked where Lord Montreville was gone—annoyed, when they were obliged to answer they did not know,—annoyed, when they were asked when he returned—annoyed, at being again obliged to reply they could not tell—annoyed, when people looked surprised at their answers—annoyed, when they looked wise and cunning, and treated these answers as discreet evasions.

At length, on the tenth day from Lord Montreville's departure, his servant was seen riding up the coach-road, towards the back-door. Lucy's heart beat very quick, and she thought it quite abominable of John not to bring the note up-stairs immediately. She would fain have told her mother that she had seen the servant arrive, and that John was evidently waiting to finish his dinner, and

to prepare the luncheon, before he brought the note; but she was ashamed to show her impatience, and she resolutely continued to copy music.

John, it is presumed, had a good appetite that day, at least the time appeared unaccountably long. At length, however, luncheon was announced, and the note delivered, with the information that Lord Montreville's servant was to wait for an answer.

"It must be the proposal; and the servant is not to return without the answer," thought Lucy, and her eyes felt dizzy. She glanced at the exterior of the note—it was three-cornered! It could not be a proposal. No! Never did a proposal come in the shape of a three-cornered note! It was very short, announcing his return, and begging if Mrs. Heckfield had finished the third volume of some novel which he had lent her, that she would return it, as he was sending back a box of books to the library.

Lucy durst not ask what were the contents of the note; but her mother threw it to her, bidding her look for the book. She read the mo-

mentous communication, the withholding of which by John had so excited her internal wrath, and she thought it the shortest, oddest note, she ever read!—so abrupt!—evidently written in such a hurry! There could be no doubt, however, what it meant to convey—a complete breaking off of the intimacy with their family;—even sending for his book in such haste!

Meanwhile, she hunted for the volume, and she packed it up, resolving in her own mind to beware of the base deceiver, man; and feeling herself a slighted damsel.

Lord Montreville's absence had been caused by business connected with the intentions he entertained towards Lucy; but if he had acted upon a plan, he could not have shown more consummate policy. Every one values more highly whatever they have lost, or believe themselves on the point of losing; and when, in the course of that very day, he himself called at Rosehill Lodge, Lucy felt very happy, and greeted him with a blushing cheek and conscious face, which made him think he had really inspired the young thing with the tenderest interest; and Lucy, when she felt her

heart beat, said to herself, "This is love—it can be nothing else."

They were prepared for their walk, when Lord Montreville called; and he begged leave to accompany them. Mrs. Heckfield stopped to give some directions to the gardener, Lord Montreville proceeded along the shrubbery-path with Lucy, and Mrs. Heckfield was not so swift of foot as to overtake them without exerting herself more than she thought there was any occasion to do. The three-cornered note had not appeared to her such decisive evidence of a wish to withdraw from their acquaintance.

Lord Montreville expressed his pleasure at returning to Lyneton,—not that he liked Lyneton—he thought it an odious place; but he was so glad to find himself once more in the neighbourhood of Rosehill Lodge: but great as was the pleasure he felt, he could hardly flatter himself his return could give any corresponding pleasure; if he could suppose so, he should indeed esteem himself fortunate.

"It is coming," thought Lucy; and she

now felt as much afraid he should propose, as she had before felt afraid he would not. Her whole wish was to avert the momentous explanation.

“ Oh, yes,” she answered, “ mamma is always very glad to see you. Where is mamma? perhaps she has missed us; we had better find her;” and she turned and mended her pace.

“ May I not hope to detain you one moment, Miss Heckfield?” asked Lord Montreville, in a voice of earnest persuasion.

“ Oh! it is as good as come!” thought Lucy; “ what shall I do?—Oh yes, certainly,” she answered; but walked on faster than ever.

“ If you would allow me a few moments’ conversation, Miss Heckfield, I have much to say that interests me deeply.”

“ Where can mamma be?” rejoined Lucy, in a tone of fear and trepidation.

“ For a few moments you must listen to me!” &c. &c. &c.

Suffice it to say, Lord Montreville then proposed. The words of a proposal are horribly stupid to the ears of all but the parties concerned; and in what precise terms Lord

Montreville couched the offer of his hand, heart, fortune, and titles, has remained, and will ever remain, unknown. A terrified "Oh dear!" uttered by Lucy when he began to unfold his mind, were the only words which escaped her lips. When he pressed for an answer, she did not say "No!" but she still walked on, her pace increasing every second, her close garden-bonnet well pulled over her face, which was rigidly directed on the gravel-walk before her, so that no one who was not immediately opposite had a chance of catching a glimpse of her countenance. Even Lord Montreville began to feel a little awkward. He had made love often enough, but he had proposed but once before; and that was in his early youth, to a very rich heiress, who had soon after married a Duke. Fortunately for the nerves of both, they came upon Mrs Heckfield at a turn in the walk. She saw with a glance that something decisive had taken place, and she hastened to relieve Lucy, and also to clench the matter.

Lucy slipped her arm within Mrs. Heckfield's, and feeling comparatively easy and

secure, now she had interposed her mother between herself and her suitor, she walked on in silence, carefully contriving to make each step so exactly keep time, that the somewhat rounded form of the matron should completely eclipse the slender form of the girl.

Lord Montreville explained himself in becoming and graceful terms ; and Mrs. Heckfield, in a rapture of scarcely concealed joy, declared with what pleasure she should communicate Lord Montreville's flattering declaration, to Colonel Heckfield.

“ But, my dear Mrs. Heckfield, I have not yet been allowed to hope. Your daughter has not given me one word, one look of encouragement, and I need your kind influence to induce her—”

“ Lucy, my dear, you have not been so uncivil as to—My dear child, don't be so silly. You must excuse her, my dear Lord Montreville, she is so young, and so little used to these agitating scenes. *I* know what her feelings are, and although she is not at this moment able to speak for herself, I think I may answer for it you need not despair. Perhaps,



if you were to leave her for a short time to compose herself, she would be more able to enjoy your society by dinner-time."

"Must I then depart without hearing my fate? But I would not distress Miss Heckfield on any consideration, and I had rather pass some hours of suspense and wretchedness myself than that she should feel one moment's annoyance. I trust she will allow me to prove by my future life that such are my sentiments." He took her unresisting hand, and pressing it between his own with an air of gallantry, he took his departure with very little doubt or suspense as to the result of the family colloquy. But he wished not only to be accepted, but to be preferred. He was himself totally incapable of again feeling the passion of love, if indeed any of the *liaisons* and flirtations in which he had been engaged deserved such a name; but he wished to excite it, and it was to him an amusing and a gratifying study, to watch the flutter and the trepidations of the young thing who was apparently now experiencing them for the first time.

As soon as he was fairly out of sight, Lucy

burst into tears, and threw herself upon her mother's shoulder, saying, "Oh, mamma, I am as good as married!"

"Well, my love, and do you wish to live single all your life?"

"Oh no, mamma!"

"And do you dislike Lord Montreville?"

"Oh no, mamma!"

"You seemed to me very uneasy and restless when he went away without proposing."

"Yes, mamma, so I was, certainly."

"And you looked very happy when he called just now. Were you not glad to see him?"

"Yes, mamma, I certainly was."

"Well, my dear, if you were sorry he went away without proposing, you must be glad he has come back, and has proposed."

"Yes, I suppose I am, but I do not feel as if I was."

"Do you wish me, then, to refuse him? I would never force any girl's inclinations, as I have always told you, and I am ready to take the whole thing upon myself if you please; for really, after the encouragement you have given

him, I do not see how you can consistently say he is not agreeable to you."

"Have I encouraged him so very much?"

"I do not know, my love; but you allowed him to take your hand just now, and you always appeared to have neither eyes nor ears for any one else when he was present."

"He always had so much the most to say."

"Well, you know best: I can say no more than that if you dislike him, I am ready to refuse him for you. Do you wish me to do so?"

"Oh, no! not that—"

"Then you wish me to accept him, in your name?"

"Oh, not quite that, mamma."

"My dear, girls must say Yes or No. As I have always told you, I will not put any force on your inclinations."

Nothing persuades people so much, as saying you would not persuade them,—nothing constrains them so much, as saying you would put no constraint upon them. This Mrs. Heckfield felt from female tact. It was from intuition, not by design, that she used these expressions,

while at the same time she thereby re-assured herself that she was not hurrying Lucy into a worldly marriage.

“Do you wish me to tell Lord Montreville that, although you may have seemed to prefer his society to that of others, you do not in fact prefer him, and that therefore you must decline the offer he is so flattering as to make you. Shall I say so?”

“No, mamma; I should be very sorry, I am sure.”

“Then you wish me to say yes?”

“I suppose I do, mamma.”

“Well, my love, I think you have decided very wisely for yourself, and no girl ever had more reason to be delighted with her prospects. You have been selected from all the rest of your sex by a man who has been universally reckoned most fascinating and irresistible, and whom all the ladies were in love with, when he was only a younger brother; and now that he has a noble fortune, and high rank, and might choose from all the first beauties in the land, he picks out my little Lucy, who is crying like a child, at having got—just the very thing she

was ready to cry because she thought she should not get, for I saw your face this morning when the note came."

Lucy smiled through her tears ; the picture of the conquest she had made was agreeable to her self-love, and the picture of her inconsistency was undeniably true.

Mrs. Heckfield kissed her, and hastened to Colonel Heckfield to communicate the important intelligence.

## CHAPTER VII.

Oh, never may the hope that lights thine eyes,  
Sweet maid, be changed to disappointment's gloom ;  
Never, th' ingenuous frolic laugh I prize  
To the forced smile that care must oft assume ;  
But may the blissful dream of thy young heart,—  
That dream from which so many wake too late,—  
Of joys that love requited shall impart,  
Be realized in thy approaching fate !

COLONEL HECKFIELD was a quiet, easy, amiable man, whom everybody loved. He was in the habit of thinking his wife understood such matters better than he did, and that, as she had hitherto married all his girls extremely well, there was no need of his interference. He always considered the affair as appertaining to Mrs. Heckfield, and never felt as if his daughters had any other share in the whole transaction, than that of being the in-

struments employed by Mrs. Heckfield's master-hand. So much did he look upon her as the principal, that he was once heard to say, "when my wife married Sir Charles Selcourt—"

The happy mother proceeded to inform Mademoiselle Hironnelle of the high honours which awaited her pupil.

"Ah, Madame, I thought well when Miss Lucy had such bad head-ache yesterday *que c'était l'objet*. Miss Lucy was in anger with me, but I had reason. I know myself what it is *de se consumer dans l'absence*."

Mrs. Heckfield dreaded the history of Mademoiselle's faithless lover, the bookseller at Caen, who had not written to her for three years, seven months, and three weeks, and she hastened to tell Emma that she might now look forward to coming out very soon.

"And I shall go to Almack's with Lucy, after all, mamma!"

Neither did Mrs. Heckfield fail to tell Milly of the lofty station to which her nursling would be raised.

"Sure, Ma'am! and so Miss Lucy is going to leave us," said Milly, with a calm and

stoical manner, very unlike that she usually had when any thing most remotely affecting one of the "dear children" was in question.

"Yes, nurse; and I do think I am the most fortunate of mothers."

"La! Ma'am, to have all your children leave you so soon? Sure, you will be very lonesome when they are all married and gone?"

"Oh, nurse, we mothers are never selfish. We wish for nothing but our children's advantage."

How many parents sacrifice the happiness, under the firm conviction they are promoting the welfare, of the children for whom they would themselves be ready to endure every privation.

Lucy had received her father's cordial blessing, Mademoiselle's Frenchified embrace, her sister's thoughtless, merry congratulations, and Milly's thoughtful, serious, good wishes. She came down to dinner with a cheek flushed by vague emotions, and conscious eyes, which durst not rest on any one. She looked really lovely!

Lord Montreville was received by Mrs. Heckfield with unfeigned joy; by Colonel



Heckfield with heartiness ; by Lucy, with a pleased tremor, which was perfectly satisfactory. A look from Mrs. Heckfield, and he seated himself by Lucy's side.

“ You will, then, allow me to prove by my future life, as I did this morning when I sacrificed my own wishes to your's, that I prefer your gratification to my own.”

“ Indeed, you are very good — I hope always . . . .”

Dinner was announced. Lord Montreville offered his arm to Lucy as the accepted lover, instead of to Mrs. Heckfield, as merely the visitor of highest rank.

There was no retreating after this, even supposing she had wished to do so ; for the Denbys and several others were present. He was more than usually amiable ! His attentions were not too marked ; his manners were so frank, and so polite to every one, there was nothing that could make her shy or uncomfortable ; so that she felt quite grateful to him for putting her so much more at her ease, than under the circumstances she could have thought possible.

In the course of the evening, Mrs. Heckfield

communicated the great event of the day to her friend Mrs. Denby, under a strict promise of secrecy, to which Mrs. Denby rigidly adhered; notwithstanding which, the small town of Lyneton, and the adjoining village of Purley, and half the country-houses in the neighbourhood, were apprised of the fact before the next sun sank into the Western ocean. The propagation of a secret is a mystery; every body promises, and nobody breaks their promise; and yet the propagation of the secret is rapid in proportion to the strictness of the promise—I cannot, and therefore will not attempt to explain this paradox.

That night, when Milly attended Lucy's *coucher*, her countenance was unusually serious, and Lucy felt uncomfortable in her presence. She knew not what to say; and yet she was so much in the habit of making Milly a party to all the innocent pains and pleasures of her short life, that she felt awkward in not discussing this most momentous occurrence.

“Nurse, I hope you will like Lord Montreville!”

“I am sure, my dear Miss Lucy, I shall

like any gentleman that makes you a good husband."

"He told me, to-day, he had rather be wretched himself than give me one moment's annoyance."

"Sure, Miss! No gentleman can't speak no fairer than that."

"I suppose that is what all lovers say, though. I suppose John said that kind of thing to you?"

"Lord save your sweet heart, Miss! John never said such fine things to me. He was but a plain-spoken young man; though he was always for saving me any trouble that he could, poor fellow! and nobody could work no harder for his family, while he had health to do it."

"Won't it be nice having Emma to stay with me, and taking her out to the great balls? And then mamma has been longing to give Mary a good singing-master. I can have her with me, you know, in London, where there are all the best masters; and poor Mademoiselle would be so glad to see her sister; and I will have such a charming school

for poor children—(By the by, they shan't have brown frocks, I like green so much better,) — and I shall be sure to have a beautiful horse, for all the ladies ride in the Park now ! Oh ! and I can give Dame Notter the new red cloak I have so long wanted to get her, only my pocket-money was so low. Do you know the Montreville diamonds are supposed to be the finest in England after the Duchess of P——'s ? And when I am in London, where you know I must be while Lord Montreville is attending Parliament, I shall see Harriet every day, and all those dear children ! I wonder how far St. James's Square is from Upper Baker Street ?”

“ I can't say for certain, Miss ; but I think 'tis a good step.”

“ Well, it does not signify ; for of course I shall have carriages ; and I can send for them constantly when I do not go to Baker Street.”

“ Ah ! you are a kind-hearted young lady ; and good-night, and God bless you, and may you be as happy as you expect to be, and as you deserve to be !”

Milly sighed to think how much the notion of grandeur and of fine things of this world had taken possession of her young lady's mind; "Though, to be sure, 'twas all in the way of being kind and good to others."

The next few days passed off agreeably enough. When among the rest of the family, Lord Montreville was so generally pleasing, that she felt happy and contented; but whenever they were alone, she felt unaccountably shy, and, if possible, she either left the room with her mother, or detained her sister by her side. The kind, protecting, almost parental manner, which had at first so won upon her confidence, while at the same time it flattered her vanity, was exchanged for something more of the lover; and the ease she had felt in his society was gradually diminishing, at the very moment it was most desirable it should increase. Moreover, she occasionally found that it was not impossible for her to do amiss in his eyes. Her inordinate passion for animals, which he had appeared to think so very *naïf* and fascinating, did not always meet with the same looks of amused admira-

tion, which had, unknown to herself, encouraged her in her avowed fondness for them. He frequently remonstrated with her upon running out without her bonnet, and upon taking off her gloves when she was arranging the flowers, by which means she dirtied, and occasionally even scratched her fingers. He was dreadfully particular about shoes!

These were trifles; but it seemed to her odd, that the very things he had appeared to think natural charms, “snatching a grace beyond the reach of art,” should now be the very points he wished altered.

She was not aware how often the fault which excites disapprobation, allures, while it is condemned;—how often, also, the virtue which charms, is most perseveringly undermined by the person who peculiarly feels its attraction.

Mrs. Heckfield insisted upon going to London to procure the wedding-clothes. Poor Lucy! Many people have a distinct abstract love of dress;—happy is it for them!—for as there is no doubt that a tolerably good-looking woman, very well dressed, will, in these days, eclipse a much handsomer one who is ill-

dressed, surely it is a fortunate thing for those who can thus amuse, and embellish themselves at the same time. But this was not Lucy's case. She was glad to look as well as she could, but the means of doing so were to her irksome ; and she would fain have trusted the whole affair to mamma and to Mademoiselle. But no ! Lord Montreville was exceedingly particular and anxious upon the subject. He especially recommended the only shoemaker who, to his mind, had an idea of making a shoe ; and Lucy had at least half-a-dozen pair made, fitted, and descanted upon, before he was satisfied that they did justice to the shape of her foot, which proved extremely good when it was properly *chaussé*. She was half angry at his numerous criticisms and remarks upon the make of her gowns, and considerably bored at the number of times he wished to have them altered ; still he did it all in so kind and so good-humoured a manner, she could not do otherwise than submit. But when he recommended his own dentist, and various tinctures, and tooth-powders, she felt half insulted. With the full consciousness

about her of youth, and health, and ivory teeth, she thought, though he might have occasion for dentists and dentifrices, she needed not such things, and she felt for a moment the full difference of their ages. It was but for a moment — she was his plighted wife — her young affections were vowed to him ; and she would have fancied herself guilty, to wish him other than he was.

There were moments when her spirits were somewhat depressed ; but at others, she was dazzled and excited by the beautiful presents that arrived every day. The diamonds, the Montreville diamonds, which were now her's. The large pearl, which had belonged to Henrietta Maria, and which had been given by her to an ancestress of Lord Montreville's ; a diamond ring, placed by Charles II. on the taper finger of the beautiful wife of a Sir Ralph Montreville, a short time previous to his elevation to the Peerage ; an antique aigrette, presented by Queen Anne, on occasion of a royal *fête* ! Ornaments of more modern date were showered upon her ; but the heir-looms which assorted so well with the Welsh Castle,



with its unpronounceable name, its donjon-keep, its subterranean passages, and its massive walls, were much more suited to her taste.

Lord Montreville had neither father, mother, brother, nor sister, to whom he need introduce his bride elect ; and as all his cousins and other relatives were out of town at this season of the year, he lived entirely with his future family, without being called upon to introduce them to any of his own circle. This was precisely what he wished. Little did Lucy imagine, when, in the warmth of her heart, she was anticipating the kind things she would do to brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins, how little Lord Montreville intended to marry the whole family. Want of knowledge of the world, or rather of *l'usage du monde*, was *naïveté* in the blooming youthful Lucy, but not so in the middle-aged parents, or the hoyden younger misses. Lord Montreville was not much of a politician ; he was not a man of deep reading, though his mind was sufficiently cultivated to give grace, if not depth, to his observations : he was not witty, though he was often droll,

and consequently it was on living people and passing events that his conversation chiefly turned. Any one who knows every one worth knowing, and can talk of them and their concerns with some tact, and not much ill-nature, is reckoned agreeable ; but he felt that his *histoires* lost half their piquancy from the ignorance of his audience respecting the persons alluded to. Though it had amused him to enchant the whole family, especially while he had an ulterior object in view,—that object once gained, he found their society insipid, and in London he became peculiarly sensible how inexpedient it would be to transplant them into his own circle. Mrs. Bentley, the eldest daughter, and the dear children of whom poor Lucy meant to see so much, were wholly out of the question.

Country gentlefolks not of the first water of fashion, (for the Heckfields were not vulgar—their dress, their house, their equipage were all perfectly presentable,) are infinitely less objectionable to the very refined, than London gentility not of the first class. Mrs.

Bentley was very rich, and her house in Upper Baker Street was a very good one, and she dressed in the extreme of the fashion ; but she wanted the air *distingué* which was natural to Lucy. Though handsome, she was inclined to be large and red, and withal, she was a little languishing, and she was especially languishing for Lord Montreville. She looked as strong as a horse, but she complained of nerves ; she was a good woman, and loved her children, but she talked as if she could not bear to have them with her, and declared that their noise distracted her ; and, in short, she took every possible pains to make herself appear as little amiable, and as unlike what she really was, as possible.

Sir Charles and Lady Selcourt came to attend the wedding, and Lord Montreville soon perceived that Lady Selcourt was an unexceptionable person for Lady Montreville, or any other lady, to appear with in public ; but he doubted whether her society at home would be as advantageous for any newly-married young woman. Her figure, which was always beautiful, was

dressed in the most perfect taste; her eyes, which were very large and very dark, became lustrous from the addition of rouge, which, as we anticipated, she now habitually wore; and in the evening her skin, which by daylight was yellowish, became brilliantly white. There was not a fault to be found in her own manner; but Lord Montreville soon perceived by Sir Charles's that she had proved not the weaker, but the stronger vessel.

The morning after Lady Selcourt's arrival in London, the sisters went shopping together; and after tossing over various silks and gauzes, they both fixed upon one which they pronounced to be quite lovely; when Lucy suddenly checked herself, saying—

“ Oh, no, I won't have it though, for Lord Montreville does not like pink !”

“ Well, but he is not going to wear it himself,” answered Lady Selcourt.

“ But, I mean, he does not like that I should wear pink.”

“ My dear Lucy, you are not going to yield to all his fancies in this manner? You will entirely spoil him; you will make a ty-

rant of him. It would not do with a young man !”

“ It would not do with a young man,” grated rather unpleasantly on Lucy’s ears. However, when they were once more seated in the carriage, she resumed,

“ But, my dear Sophy, one must please one’s husband, you know ; and though you would have that pink gauze sent with the others we are to look at by candle-light, I do not mean to buy it. Surely it is not worth while to annoy any one, for the colour of a gown.”

“ My dear Lucy, you are very young ; you do not know what you are about ; of course, in marrying, your idea is not to be merely an old,—a middle-aged man’s, play-thing. You owe it to yourself, to the station you will hold in society, I may almost add to Lord Montreville himself, not to be a mere cipher, but to be an independent and a reasonable person—a free agent. And, depend upon it, if you begin in this manner, you will never be able to rescue yourself from any thralldom in which he may wish to keep you. Every thing depends on the first start—I know it—and

so did Sir Charles's old French valet, for when we got into our carriage on the wedding-day, I had my beautiful in-laid India work-box, which you know is rather large, and I overheard old Le Clerc whisper to his master, 'Sire Charles, Sire Charles — you band-box to-day, you band-box all your life!' Sir Charles accordingly complained of the size of the box, and begged me to let the servant take care of it behind, but I felt, if I yielded then, I was undone. I explained to him the value I had for this particular box, and that it would break my heart to have it spoiled: and he saw I was so hurt at the idea of its being scratched or injured, that he gave up the point. Indeed, I must say, I have always found him very reasonable, and it is quite impossible for two people to go on better together. I never think of opposing his wishes when I am indifferent upon a subject. He knows, therefore, my anxiety to oblige him, and so he never thwarts me when he sees I am determined on any thing. Depend upon it, Lucy, if you begin in this manner before

marriage, you will be no better than a slave after marriage."

Sophy always had such a flow of words, and such a multitude of good arguments to adduce, that Lucy knew it was useless to dispute with her; besides, she was older, and she was a married woman, and she always was the cleverest; and Lucy was more than half persuaded there was a good deal of truth in what she said. Accordingly, she showed Milly the gauzes as she was dressing for dinner, and promulgated her intention of having a gown of the pink one.

"La, Miss!" said Milly, "I thought my Lord did not like pink, and that he made you send back the pink hat."

"Yes, but do you not think it is great nonsense to let one's husband interfere about such trifles? What can it signify to him whether I wear pink or blue?"

"I don't know, Miss, as it can signify much to anybody; but I should think it signified more to him than to anybody else."

"But this is to be a smart gown to wear in company, and not at home with him."

“ But sure, Miss Lucy, you don’t want to look well in any body’s eyes more than in your own husband’s.”

“ That is very true,” thought Lucy ; “ it would be very wrong to wish to be admired by other people, and not by one’s husband.”

In the evening the gauzes were spread out, and Sophy expatiated on the beauties of the pink one. Lucy timidly admired it, and cast a glance towards Lord Montreville ; she was half ashamed of appearing afraid to buy it, and was acquiescing in its merits, when Lord Montreville said,

“ I suppose you are afraid of my admiring you too much, as you are bent upon the only colour which I do not think becoming to you.”

“ Do you really dislike pink so much ?” asked Lucy.

“ The colour is a pretty colour, but you know I think you look prettier in any other. Perhaps other people may admire you in it.”

“ I am sure I do not want other people to admire me. It would be very wrong if I did, now Do you like that *vapeur*, Lord Mon-



treville, or this white one? The white is the prettiest after all. Yes, I do like the white best, Sophy, and the white I will have."

And she put a resolute tone into the last sentence, that her submission should not look like submission in Sophy's eyes. Why is it many amiable people are as much ashamed of appearing amiable, as many unamiable ones are of appearing unamiable?

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Calantha.*—To court, good brother, ere her bloom of mind  
Be set for fruit ? Oh, take her not to court,  
Where we be slaves to petty circumstance  
Of empty form and fashion. Where the laugh  
Pealed merrily from the joy-freighted heart,  
Gives place to measured smiles still worn by all,  
As 'twere a thing of custom, and alike  
Lavished on friend and foe ; where your fair child,  
For coronals of buttercups and hare-bells,  
Must prank her youth in gorgeous robes of state,  
And where sweet nature's impulses must all  
Be curbed, suppressed. *Manuscript Poems.*

AT length the awful day arrived. Lucy was married, and the Marquess and Marchioness of Montreville drove from St. George's Church in the neatest of dark-green chariots, with four grey horses, leaving Colonel Heckfield sad, but satisfied, Mrs. Heckfield joyful, but dissolved in tears, Emma full

of delight, wonderment, and awe, at her sister Lucy being actually a Marchioness, Made-moiselle feeling herself the person most peculiarly concerned, inasmuch as it must have been entirely owing to the superior education she had given her pupil that she had been deemed worthy to be raised to so lofty a station in the peerage. Milly watched the carriage till it was out of sight, with tearful eyes, and left the window with a foreboding shake of the head.

The bride and bridegroom spent the honeymoon at Ashdale Park, and Lucy was much edified by the grandeur of the place. The park was extensive, the pleasure-grounds immense, the gardens perfect. She had nothing to do but to enjoy all she saw. She went round the pictures several times, till she thought there was no pleasure in making her neck ache with looking up, and her eyes ache with peering through Claude Lorraine glasses; she repeatedly walked about the gardens, but she dreaded the sight of the gardener; he used such hard names, and he was such a gentleman, that she scarcely ventured to ask

him the name of a flower, much less to suggest any fancy of her own. 'The house was completely *montée*. The *maître d'hôtel* sent in the bill of fare, but she could never have presumed to propose any alteration in the repast. She had heard that Ashdale Park was famous for bantams, and she one day expressed a wish to see them. Lord Montreville ordered the pony phaeton to drive her to the poultry establishment."

"Oh, let us walk, dear Lord Montreville; I had much rather walk."

"It has been just raining, my dear Lucy, and your shoes are thin,"

"But I can put on thick ones in a moment."

"I hate to see a woman's foot look like a man's. Nothing so ugly as great coarse shoes, upon a pretty woman's little foot."

"Oh! but nobody will see me."

"Yes, I shall see you," answered Lord Montreville, and Lucy felt frightened lest he should think she could have meant he was nobody. So the pony phaeton was ordered. In about three quarters of an hour it ap-

peared, and a groom on another beautiful little long-tailed pony to follow, and Lucy's wadded cloaks, and Lord Montreville's fur cloak, and the boa, and the parasol, and the umbrella, and the reticule, &c. were all duly packed and arranged, and they entered the carriage, and drove about a mile to the end of the park.

Having summoned the poultryman, Lady Montreville was introduced to all the different yards and coops, the winter roosting-place, and the summer roosting-place, and the coops for early chickens, and the places for fatting ; and Lucy soon felt that the poulterer, who did the honours of the establishment, was much more the master of the whole concern than she could ever be ; so, having bestowed the requisite portion of approbation and admiration, she was departing without any particular desire to revisit the scene, when a young gosling waddled past her feet. She stooped to pick it up—it escaped her—she ran after it—she succeeded in catching it—she brought the pretty little yellow thing back to Lord Montreville in great delight at

having secured it, and fully expecting that he would sympathize in her feelings.

“Look at the pretty creature!—Is it not a love?—dear little thing!”

“My dear Lady Montreville, it will dirty you all over—its feathers are coming off: I beg, I entreat, you will put it down!” added Lord Montreville in a tone of annoyance.

Lucy let the gosling go, and followed Lord Montreville to the carriage. When they had remounted, and again arranged the cloaks and shawls, Lord Montreville said—

“My dear Lucy, you must remember that now you are a married woman, and my wife: these are little girlish ways that do not sit well upon you. I am sure your own good sense will point out to you that there ought to be something more *posé* in manner for your present situation.”

Lucy acquiesced, and resolved not to catch goslings any more.

They lived in the most perfect retirement. Lord Montreville did not mean to enter the world till he had tutored his wife into being precisely the thing he wished.

She found the time hang rather heavy on her hands ; she read, but she could not read all day ; she wrote to her mother and sisters, but she had not much to say, and a bride's letters are always very dull. No part of the household required her superintendence : she did not work much, for where was the use of working when she had plenty of money, and could buy everything so much better than she could make it ? She always hated torturing a piece of muslin, till the muslin was dirty and the pattern out of fashion. She played and sang a little ; but Lord Montreville liked Italian music, and she sang English ballads. She liked long walks ; but Lord Montreville always thought she would get tanned if the sun shone, and red if the wind blew, and wet if it had been raining, or was likely to rain. Then there were so many rooms, she never found anything at the moment she wished for it : when she was at luncheon in the ante-room, she missed her reticule, which was left in the library, where she passed the morning ; when she retired to her boudoir after her drive, she found

she had left her letters in the saloon, where they breakfasted: in the evening, when they sat in the great drawing-room, she wanted her work, and the work-box was in the library. Lord Montreville rang the bell, and a servant was despatched to bring the work-box. He returned, but the one skein of silk of the right shade was missing, and it ended by her lighting a candle and going to look for it herself. In the morning, after hunting all over the library for the book she was reading, she remembered she had left it the preceding evening in the drawing-room; and she sometimes thought it would be vastly comfortable to live in one snug room, where one had all one's things about one.

Lord Montreville had so far tamed her, that she did not think of setting out to trudge alone beyond the precincts of the shrubbery: she had learned not to pat every dog she met, or to kiss a donkey's nose; and she was as steady from a gosling or duckling as a good fox-hound from a hare. When she wanted anything at the other end of the room, she did not run, neither did she ever



jump over the footstool, and she carried a candle perpendicularly, instead of horizontally. Lord Montreville thought it was time to ascertain a little what her manners would be in society, before he ventured to ask any of his own set to his house ; and they sent forth a regular invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Delafield, Major and Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Smith's sister, Miss Brown.

Lucy was a little appalled at the prospect of making the signal after dinner. Every woman must have felt that the first time of making this little mysterious bow is an epoch in her life. Lucy was sure she should stay too long or too short a time. Then, to which of the ladies was the sign to be made ? Lord Montreville told her that when the conversation took the turn of horses, hunting, dogs, or partridges, which it invariably did somewhere between twenty minutes and half an hour after the servants had left the apartment, all women with any tact or discretion took advantage of the first pause to depart ; and that the lady whom he should hand in to

dinner would almost invariably prove the one towards whom she should direct her eyes.

The dinner went off very well. Lucy's manners were perfect. She never was awkward, and her thoughts were sufficiently occupied with the idea of making the dreaded signal at the right moment, to render her rather shy, and to prevent her spirits running away with her. She watched narrowly every thing that was said after dinner: and upon Major Smith asking her if she was fond of riding, she cast a glance towards Lord Montreville, to see if that was near enough the mark for her to rise; but, upon the whole, she thought not, as the question was addressed to herself. This occurred precisely eighteen minutes after the last servant had changed the last plate on which there had been ice; and sure enough it led the way to the usual turn of gentlemen's conversation before twenty-two minutes had expired.

Lucy had answered "Yes, but Lord Montreville had not yet found a horse he thought fit for her."

Mr. Johnson remarked, that "Nothing was so difficult to procure as a good lady's horse."

"Except a good hunter for a heavy weight," said Mr. Delafield.

"I can scarcely agree with you, Delafield," rejoined Mr. Johnson: "for a lady's horse should be so very safe, and all horses will stumble sometimes, and temper and mouth are so indispensable, besides action and ease."

"Temper is as necessary for a good hunter," interrupted Mr. Delafield, "or they knock themselves to pieces; and I know that a heavy man like me can't afford to have a horse take too much out of himself at first."

The moment was decidedly come, and Lucy, with a slight palpitation of the heart, looked at Mrs. Johnson. But Mrs. Johnson did not give a responsive glance. She was talking to Miss Brown. Lucy looked again, Mrs. Johnson was putting on her gloves, and did not raise her eyes. The conversation became every moment more sporting, and Lucy felt that if she had any tact or discretion, she ought to depart. Her heart positively beat,

but she could not venture to say any thing out loud, and she kept looking and looking, when Major Smith again addressed her, and she was obliged to answer him. He rejoined, and she found herself entangled in a fresh discourse. The half hour—more than the half hour must have elapsed! She answered with an absent air, still glancing uneasy glances, till at length Miss Brown nudged Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Johnson looked up, and Lucy hastily rose from her chair, in the middle of Major Smith's sentence.

Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Delafield made a great ceremony at the door, during which time the gentlemen stood bolt upright, with their napkins in their hands, waiting with exemplary patience while the ladies gave each other *le pas*. At length they marched out arm-in-arm, with a slight laugh to carry off their uncertainties. Lady Montreville, in her shyness, slipped her arm within Miss Brown's, and thanked her for making Mrs. Johnson look round.

“Why could I not catch her eye before?”

“Oh, don't you know? She is only the

wife of a younger son of a Baronet, and Mrs. Delafield is the wife of the eldest son of a Knight, so you know she was afraid of putting herself forward."

This was a new light to Lucy, who had never before been aware of these niceties.

Miss Brown was rather pretty, with gay laughing eyes, and a lively countenance, and Lucy was so glad to meet with a person of her own age, and who looked as if she could be merry, that she forgot it was her duty to attend to the married ladies.

She had shown Miss Brown all her diamonds and trinkets, and the wedding-gown, Miss Brown had half confessed she should soon be in want of such an article herself, Lady Montreville was in the act of trying to find out who was to be the happy man; they were in deep, interesting, and rather giggling conversation, somewhat apart, while Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Delafield were sitting up quite prim, when the gentlemen entered. Lord Montreville was not pleased. Lucy, who was accustomed to her

mother's countenance when Bell Stopford was in question, instantly recognised the expression, and was frightened out of her wits. She was conscience-stricken; she broke off her discourse with Miss Brown, she came forward to the other ladies, and began talking to them with all her might.

If people are easily offended by any want of attention from the great, in return they are easily soothed. The consciousness of being slighted is so unpleasant to the *amour propre*, that if the intention to be civil is made manifest, they readily accept the will for the deed, and they soon forgave the lovely young Marchioness when they found there was no intentional neglect.

The evening passed much like other evenings after a dinner in the country. There were no new people whom Lord Montreville wished to charm, they were old country neighbours, with whom there was no object to gain, and he let things take their course. He had merely wished to accustom Lucy to sit at the head of her table.

When the company had all departed, he thus addressed his wife—

“Lucy, my dear, what did I hear you saying to Miss Brown about Monday?”

“I only asked her to come here. She is such a nice girl—is she not? I said I would send for her, that was all.”

And Lucy began to fear that “all” was a great deal. It seemed so natural to ask Miss Brown to her own house at the moment she did so, but now that she told Lord Montreville what she had done, it did not seem so natural.

“This will never do, my dear Lucy: Miss Brown is not at all the sort of person I wish you to be intimate with,—not at all the sort of person with whom I wish my wife to appear in public, and, if you are intimate in private, you must be the same in public. I hold it out of the question to begin intimacies you cannot keep up;—it exposes people to being accused of caprice and finery, which are very different things from the proper pride and self-respect, which should make them move in their own

sphere, and associate with persons in their own station. You understand me, my dear Lucy?—and you will remember what I say:—and now let us see what can be done. Her coming here is wholly out of the question. If she is the first person who visits you after your marriage it is proclaiming her your friend. I want to see my lawyer some time soon, and instead of sending for him here, we will go to St. James's Square for a few days, and you can write a very civil note,—mind, a very civil note,—(I never affronted any body in my life,) and tell her we are obliged to go to town on particular business.”

All this was said in the sweetest and kindest tone imaginable, but Lucy was confounded and stupified when she found her having invited Miss Brown to her house for a day had brought on this complete *déménagement*. She felt herself a cipher; she felt herself perfectly helpless. But the tone was so kind, and at the same time so decided, that she had not a word to say. Lord Montreville turned to other subjects,—told her he had seen her distress after dinner, laughed with her at the rival dig-



nities of the lady of the Baronet's youngest son, and the lady of the Knight's eldest son, and was most gay and agreeable.

Lucy did not quite like so entirely giving up her point without a struggle. If he had spoken a little longer, if he had harped upon the subject, she would have rallied, and said something ; but before she had recovered her first surprise, the whole affair was settled and done, and she did not know how to recur to it.

The next morning, after breakfast, Lord Montreville said, " Lucy, my love, write your note, and as I am going to the stables, I will order a groom to be ready to take it to Miss Brown."

He left the room. There was no time to remonstrate. Lucy thought of Lady Selcourt, —she thought of her mother. Lady Selcourt would simply not have written the note ; her mother would have had a thousand arguments before Colonel Heckfield had finished half his first sentence. She had not cool courage for the first line of conduct, nor had she had presence of mind for the latter. There was nothing left for her to do but to submit ; so she

wrote the note, (not without three foul copies,) sealed it very neatly, rang the bell, and gave it to the servant with a heavy heart ; not that she cared for Miss Brown, but she felt herself imprisoned and enthralled.

## CHAPTER IX.

Une belle femme est aimable dans son naturel, elle ne perd rien à être négligée, et sans autre parure que celle qu'elle tire de sa beauté et de sa jeunesse. Une grace naïve éclate sur son visage, anime ses moindres actions : il y aurait moins de péril à la voir avec tout l'attirail de l'ajustement et de la mode.

LA BRUYERE.

To London they went on Monday. Lucy was languid and out of spirits during the first part of the journey, but the rapid motion of the swinging vehicle and the four horses revived her young spirits, and the busy streets of London roused her, and the first sight of her house in London pleased her. The excitement, however, did not last. The hall was grand, the staircase noble, the rooms were vast, but they were not set out in order, as the family were not to take up their abode in London till the meeting of Parliament.

The magnificent lustres were in canvass bags, the sofas in brown holland covers, the carpets only put down in the dining-room and the smaller back drawing-room. One day, while Lord Montreville was occupied with his lawyer, Lucy, from real *désœuvrement*, perambulated the desolate apartments, and uncovered the end of a sofa and the corner of an ottoman. She found them beautiful,—she longed to see the effect; she set to work, removed canvass bags, and paper coverings, &c. Her blood began to flow, and her spirits to rise, at being actively employed: she took care not to send for the housemaid; she was quite glad to work hard. She was in the act of dragging forth a beautiful *chaise-longue*, her bonnet tossed aside, her hair all out of curl, her gloves as gloves must be that have come in contact with London furniture, her shawl having slipped off her shoulders on the floor, her fine embroidered handkerchief covered with dirt and dust off some delicate little ornaments on the chimney-piece, the room spread with all the different envelopes she had abstracted from the furniture, when Lord Montreville entered, and,

with him, a very handsome, very well-dressed, very pleasing-looking young man.

Lucy stopped short in her employment, and no little boy caught by his schoolmaster in the act of stealing apples ever looked more shame-faced, more confused, more guilty. Worse and worse. Lord Montreville introduced the stranger as his cousin, Lionel Delville. Lucy knew he was the oracle of the world of fashion, and the person for whose opinion Lord Montreville had more deference than for any other person's living. She stammered, blushed, and stood abashed.

Lord Montreville, however, showed no outward signs of annoyance ; but, with a smiling countenance and easy manner, he said :

“ You seem to have been very busy ! Well ! I dare say you will settle the rooms with much more taste than ever they were arranged before : women have ten times more tact in making a house look inhabited, than any man—always excepting my cousin Lionel. You must take him into your counsels, Lucy, if you wish your suite of apartments to be perfect ;” and Lord Montreville led the way back into the boudoir.

Lucy was comforted at Lord Montreville appearing to take her *équipée* so quietly, and she in some measure recovered her self-possession.

She looked exceedingly pretty in her dishevelled state, and Lionel Delville thought his cousin, the untutored, rustic Marchioness, a most piquante creature. But though Lord Montreville himself had been originally attracted by this same manner, it was not the manner by which he intended that his wife should charm; and when Mr. Delville took his leave, the lecture which Lucy flattered herself had passed away, arrived with accumulated seriousness.

His wrath was not disarmed by the degree in which he had seen Lionel pleased. He wished him to approve; but he did not at all wish to see him attracted. When he advised Lucy to take him into her counsels, it was from the fear Mr. Delville should read how little he wished she should do so.

Lucy quaked at the tone in which he addressed her.

“Do you think, Lucy, I have had reason

to be pleased at the mode in which I have been obliged to present my wife to the first of my relations who has seen her? Do you think your appearance and your occupation were calculated to make a favourable impression upon my family?"

"I am so sorry, dear Lord Montreville! but I did so long to see those pretty things!"

"Could you not send for the housemaid?"

"Yes; to be sure I might; but I had nothing to do; and I only meant to take one peep, and I never thought of any body calling; I thought there was not a soul in London; and then, I know so few people—I never thought of being caught!"

"You forget that I have a very large acquaintance, and that you are my wife; and you also forget one thing, which I have often tried to impress upon your mind—that a woman should never be unfit to be seen—that she should never be *caught*, as you term it, employed in any manner unsuited to her rank and station in life—that your pleasures should be such as befit the situation in which I have placed you; and that my wife should always

act as if the eyes of the world were upon her. Let me hear no more of being *caught* — the expression is worthy of a school-miss in her teens.”

Lucy blushed rosy red. She blushed for shame ; for she felt there was something undignified in the expression : but she blushed more from anger at being treated as a missish girl—at being, in fact, accused of vulgarity. She was on the point of crying, but the servant entered with the tickets for the play ; and he put on coals, and swept up the ashes, and lighted the lamps, and shut the shutters. Lucy had time to recover herself, and Lord Montreville to reflect that he should not do wisely to frighten her too much ; that his own annoyance had perhaps caused him to speak more angrily than the thing deserved.

It was, therefore, in a gay and good-humoured tone, that he bade her make haste and dress ; though, at the same time he gave her a hint to be simple in her costume, as it was not good *ton* to be too smart at the play.

They dined alone ; but Lionel Delville and a friend joined them late in the evening. If



he thought her pretty in the morning, he thought her lovely in her present quiet, but most *soigné* and fashionable attire.

He seated himself by her side, and gave her very little opportunity of enjoying the drollery of the afterpiece. But he did not, he could not, flirt with her. There was a complete simplicity—a straight-forward frankness in her manner, which rendered it impossible to know how to begin. Moreover, she believed herself in love with her husband; and besides, being dutifully and religiously devoted, she was particularly anxious to give him satisfaction after her errors of the morning; and her real thoughts and attention were on him and for him alone. He could not but be pleased; knowing women to their heart's core, as he did, he saw the genuine innocence of her manner, and he felt assured that it must take a long apprenticeship to the world to contaminate the purity of her mind. He resolved to watch attentively over it.

The kindness of his manner towards her the next day gratified her. He presented her with a magnificent real Cashmere; and the

next day with a beautiful guard-ring. She thought him very kind, and she determined to do everything to please him, which was, in fact, never to do anything except to dress well, sit on the sofa buried among cushions, (not bolt upright engaged in any employment,) and especially to fling herself back into the corner of her carriage with an elegant *abandon* when she went out airing.

Her efforts to do nothing were crowned with success: he thought her extremely improved; but this *dolce far niente* to her was not *dolce*, especially when they returned into the country, and she could not go shopping every day—an occupation to which he had no objection, as her pin-money was so ample that she could not easily be distressed.

He now thought he might venture to gather some of his own friends and relations around him, and before Christmas there arrived a large party, all people of the very highest fashion, pleasing and agreeable. They, like their host, seemed in their conversation to have adopted the motto of “*Glissez mortels, mais n'appuyez pas ;*” and though the

hours might fly swiftly and pleasantly in their society, there was nothing about them sufficiently original or individual to deserve recording.

Lucy behaved exceedingly well; she had been properly drilled before their arrival: she was in an interesting state, which, assisted by the lectures of the apothecary, and the constant solicitude of Lord Montreville, and the ennui occasioned by being headed, as a sportsman would term it, whenever she attempted to stir hand or foot, gave to her whole carriage and deportment a most excellent languor. She no longer felt any flutter when she made the signal after dinner, and, upon the whole, Lord Montreville thought the result all he could wish, except that he would fain have had her join a little more in general conversation, if he could have been quite sure of no exuberance of spirits.

Was she happy in the midst of her splendour? Her husband exceedingly attentive, and the most agreeable society collected around her. No: she was bored—from morning till night constantly suffering from ennui. She

was grateful for her husband's attentions, but they invariably prevented her doing the thing she wished to do ; and she sometimes wondered how so many little chubby children were running about the village in health and safety, who were not heirs to titles and properties.

The society of her husband's friends did not amuse her ; they were all the intimates of one clique ; and, notwithstanding their habitual good-breeding, she could not help often being unable to understand, or, at all events, to join in their conversation. A slight tone of persiflage and of quizzing in their mode of treating all subjects, also made her feel less at her ease, than she would otherwise have done after ten days' residence under the same roof ; and she often longed for a hearty laugh with Bell Stopford, a long scrambling walk with Emma and Mary, or a quiet chat with the dear, honest, affectionate Milly.

Lucy occasionally suggested how glad she should be to see her parents ; but the house was always filled with a succession of visitors. The Duke and Duchess of Altonworth an-

nounced their intention of taking Ashdale Park in their way to London, and Lord Montreville inadvertently exclaimed, "Whom shall we get to meet them, for this party disperses on Wednesday?"

"Oh, then, now we can have papa and mamma, and Emma and Mary!—that will be nice!"

Lord Montreville's countenance fell—he looked blank and dismayed. Lucy saw she was wrong, but she could not imagine that papa and mamma were not fit company for any duke or duchess in the land; so she awaited the result, blank and dismayed in her turn, but wholly at a loss to guess what was the matter. Lord Montreville soon rallied.

"I do not think that would quite do, my dear Lucy: a family party is always a dull thing, and the Duchess is very clever, and altogether—My dear Lucy, I am sure you perfectly understand me."

This time, however, Lucy could not and would not understand.

"But it will not be a family party to the

Duchess, and I am sure mamma is clever too : some people call her blue."

" Very true, my love ; but the Duchess is clever and not blue, and she is a person who is very exclusive ; she has retired habits, and does not like new acquaintances ; and, in short, we must either get somebody whom she would decidedly like to meet, or we had better have nobody."

" But we are going to town in a fortnight, and mamma has not been here yet," said Lucy with more pertinacity, and even humour, than she had ever yet shown.

" We shall be here again at Easter, and in the summer certainly, and then you shall have them all, Emma and Mary, and your old friend Milly too, if you like it ;" and Lord Montreville resolved he would do it once for all, well and thoroughly.

Lucy acquiesced, though she did not exactly see why Ashdale Park should be open to so many slight acquaintances, and yet that a visit from her parents should be so difficult of accomplishment. She was also somewhat appalled at the idea of this clever,

exclusive Duchess, whom she should have to entertain herself, for no one whom Lord Montreville thought worthy of meeting her could be found on such short notice. Lucy was sure she should dislike her; she was angry with her for, as she thought, keeping away her own family, and she determined to bear patiently the infliction of her presence for the few days she remained, and never to seek her any more. She was free from the vulgar awe which simple rank inspires to the *parvenu*, though she was not free from the *gêne* which most people feel when in company with persons who are wedded to their own set, and who do not give themselves any trouble to please those who are not of it.

The day arrived, and Lucy, who was not constitutionally shy, and had now become perfectly at her ease, in the discharge of her every-day hostess duties, awaited with composure the entry of the disagreeable Duchess.

She was rather surprised when a little, quiet, middle-aged woman, in a close bonnet, and a black cloak, slid into the room, followed by a large, gaunt, lordly-looking man.

Lord Montreville was not present. Lucy rose to receive them ; the Duchess introduced herself and the Duke, in a gentle, kind, frank manner.

They sat down, and the Duchess being very cold drew her chair close to the fire, put her feet upon the fender, and dropped out little natural sentences, which half amused, half pleased Lucy, and before they went to dress for dinner she felt more intimate with the dreaded Duchess, than with any of the other people who had yet been her inmates at Ashdale Park.

At dinner Lord Montreville was in his most agreeable vein ; the Duchess was charming, so unaffected, so straight-forward, and, withal, there was something singular and original in her turn of thought, with a graceful *bon-homme* which was peculiar to herself. The Duke was a sensible, hard-headed, high-minded man, silent in large society, but conversable enough in small ones. Lucy was interested and amused all the time, and would have talked more than she did, but that she liked to listen to the Duchess, and to watch the



pleasing expression of her countenance, and the wonderful manner in which, without youth, features, or complexion, it lighted up into something more attractive than beauty.

Upon further acquaintance she found her as good as she was fascinating. She spoke of her married daughters, of her grand-children, of her home, her garden, her son, and his wife and children, who lived at Altonworth, when in the country; of her school, of the poor people, and Lucy perceived that, in fact, her heart was so completely filled with the near and dear charities of life, that it was not strange she had no inclination to seek for other objects in the world.

Lucy's genuine feelings thawed to her immediately; and the Duchess was also pleased with the innocence and simplicity of her young hostess. Lucy was more delighted and flattered at the hope of being admitted into her intimacy, than she had been since the ball, at which she had first met Lord Montreville, when he had first made her feel

herself a person altogether superior to the common run of girls.

Lucy and the Duchess parted with a mutual wish to meet again; on the part of one, amounting to a passionate desire, on the part of the other to a kindly inclination.

## CHAPTER X.

Kingdomes are bote cares,  
State ys devoyd of staie,  
Ryches are ready snares  
And hasten to decaie.

HENRY VI. *King of England.*

WHEN in London, Lucy, although in perfect health, and peculiarly active and alert, was not permitted to go out. She was chained to the sofa, till she almost longed to be a little ill to give her some occupation. She did muster a little attack of nerves, and an occasional whim, which, unfortunately for her, served to justify Lord Montreville in the continuance of his precautions.

Lord Montreville was often at the House of Lords, and as the season advanced he was more and more absent from home. Lucy

thought the peers really worked very hard, and sacrificed a great deal of time to the good of their country. However, it was so right and praiseworthy to do so, that she could not complain.

Numberless persons left their cards with her, and she sent her's in return ; but, as she was not allowed to keep late hours, she did not go out of an evening, and her circle of acquaintance did not increase as rapidly as she expected. Lord Montreville did not allow her to admit gentlemen of a morning, and he did not encourage her seeing much of Mrs. Bentley and her "sweet children;" so that, except the visits of the Duchess of Altonworth and her daughters, with whom she soon became intimate, and the drives into the country, which she sometimes took with them, nothing could exceed the monotony of her life.

She heartily wished the spring over, and her confinement over, and another spring come, that she might revel in the anticipated delights of a good London season.

In the course of time the spring was over; they returned to the country, and Lucy re-

mind Lord Montreville that he had promised her parents should then pay them a visit. The invitation was despatched, and they arrived, father, mother, sisters, and Milly.

Lucy's situation afforded an excuse for not seeing much company, which suited Lord Montreville very well, but not so well Mrs. Heckfield, who had passed four days in London, on her way to Ashdale Park, for the purpose of providing herself and daughters with apparel fit for the succession of distinguished company which she there expected to meet.

Neither did it suit Emma and Mary, whose hearts palpitated at the prospect of wearing their new wardrobe, and at the effect it was to produce. Vague images of Barons, Viscounts, Earls, Marquesses, and even Dukes, were floating in their minds, and Mademoiselle had certainly intimated she did not see why if one of her young people had married so brilliantly, the others should not do as well, especially as Mademoiselle Emma played with much more execution than Madame la Marquise, and Mademoiselle Marie had begun learning German.

One and all were wofully disappointed when day after day elapsed, and the family party received no addition, unless it might be the clergyman of the parish, Lord Montreville's solicitor from the county town, once his agent from Lancashire, and once the Delafields.

Mrs. Heckfield appeared in perfect caps from Devi's, in the last new Parisian hat from Carson's; Emma and Mary in the crispest of white muslins, over the cleanest of white satins. In vain!—Neither Duke, Marquess, Earl, Viscount, Baron, or even Baronet, made his appearance. A fortnight had already slipped away,—the time for departure was approaching, when Mrs. Heckfield one day said to her daughter,—

“ Well, my dear Lucy, I hope when your confinement is over, you will lead a gayer life. I fancied you had your house always full of company. Your letters constantly contained a list of visitors as long as my arm, and I am sure since we have been here, scarcely a soul has crossed your threshold. We have ten times as much society at Rose Hill Lodge.”

“ Lord Montreville takes too much care of me, and that is the reason we have been so dull. I was afraid Emma and Mary would be disappointed, but whenever I proposed asking people to come, Lord Montreville seemed so afraid of my being ill. I am sure I am well enough, if he would but think so.”

“ Well, my dear, it is quite right that husbands should be attentive, and I cannot but rejoice that your's is so peculiarly so. Certainly your father never took half so much care of me. However, I hope the next time we pay you a visit we may find you well, and strong, and able to have your house full, and that I shall have the pleasure of seeing my Lucy the life of a brilliant society.”

Lucy sighed, for she had begun to understand Lord Montreville's dislike to introducing her friends to his friends, and she feared it would be long before she had them all around her again. It was not that their visit gave her all the pleasure she had anticipated from it: she felt that her husband was bored; she was aware that he avoided his own set; she was in an agony if any of her family did any of the

things which he thought out of the question ; and her sisters, who were not “come out,” although they “dined down,” as they termed it, often made her uncomfortable.

One day her mother asked a gentleman opposite if he would “take” some of the dish before her, and Lucy looked timidly towards Lord Montreville to see if he had caught the sound of a word which was peculiarly obnoxious to his ears. Emma, on another occasion, exclaimed, what a “delicious” trifle, and she felt a chill run through her, for she knew he had a particular aversion to an epithet, which to him seemed expressive of gluttony.

Mary, (who had never dined down before,) was so delighted with the variety of excellent dishes before her, that she was much inclined to go the round of the second course, and needed many admonitory nods and frowns from her mother. She also frequently tipped her chair on its two fore-legs while she was writing or working, and this Lucy knew was an unpardonable sin.

Both girls were gay and wild, and had, as most sisters have, till they have been a little



schooled in the world, the habit of talking over each other, and sometimes of interrupting the person speaking in their eagerness to rejoin. On such occasions Lord Montreville stopped short, and betook himself to a silence which was most painful to Lucy, although it was entirely unperceived by the culprits.

Lucy occasionally attempted to give them gentle hints upon these subjects, but they only seemed to think she was grown quite fine, and very difficult to please, and they could not conceal their disappointment at the retirement in which she lived.

The result was, that at the end of three weeks, when the large coach which contained them all drove from the door, a sensation of relief mingled itself with the sorrow she felt at parting from them.

Milly remained at Ashdale Park, and Lucy looked forward with unmixed pleasure to the prospect of having always about her a person so thoroughly attached, and in whom she had such perfect confidence.

In the autumn the long-expected event took place,—Lord Montreville was made happy by

the birth of a son, and Lucy was delighted to think she should soon be a free agent again.

They had removed to London for the occasion. Lord Montreville was a great deal from home, and, as there were very few people in town, the time hung heavy with Lucy; for she was so impatient to leave her sick room and her sofa, that she did not find every thought and feeling wholly absorbed in the new-born babe. She was very young in years, and still more so in character: she had by no means had enough of youth and gaiety, and was not yet ripe for the tender affections and dull details of maternity. She was charmed with her baby, and was very unhappy if it cried, but it did not suffice her for amusement to watch it all day long. She wished Lord Montreville would stay at home, and read to her, or would bring her home some news, or that somebody would come, or something happen.

Milly was her comfort. She sometimes conversed with her for hours, and listened with sympathy to the details of her life in America, and with interest to her unsophisticated view

of things in general. She thought that after all there was nothing half so good or so sensible as Milly, except the Duchess of Altonworth ;—indeed, she fancied she perceived a considerable resemblance between their characters.

They returned to the country. When the first excitement was over, of bells being rung and oxen being roasted—when the servants, the tenants, the neighbours, had all looked at the wonderful child, and pronounced it to be the very finest they had ever seen, Lucy relapsed into her former state of ennui. She began to think she must be ill.

“ Milly, I do not think I am well,” she one day promulgated to Milly, as she was sitting in the nursery.

“ La, my Lady ! I am sure you look the very picture of health ! What ever is the matter ?”

“ I do not know, exactly.”

“ You have not the head-ache, sure ?”

“ No ! my head never aches.”

“ Perhaps, my Lady, you feel tired if you walk too far.”

“ No ! I do not think I ever feel tired with walking, but I feel very tired if I do not walk.”

“ Sure, my Lady !—that ’s comical too !”

“ I never feel merry as I used to do ; and I think it must be my state of health that prevents my being so. I have thought of consulting Dr. Bolusville, only I do not know what to say to him. I have no symptom that I know of—only I ought to be so very happy. I possess every thing that a person can sit down and wish for, and yet I feel low. I sometimes think, if I had more occupation, I should be better ; but Lord Montreville is so kind, he will not let me take any trouble about any thing. Now, I dare say you did not feel low when you were in your log-hut, on the banks of your swampy river—did you ?”

“ No, my Lady ! I never did, certainly ;—when poor John was middling well, that is.”

“ Ah, yes, for you had plenty to do ! that must have been the reason. When I was a child, I always worked harder in my garden than my sisters ; and the old bailiff once gave

me a silver knife, because he said I had earned it haymaking. How I do wish Lord Montreville would let me help him to manage the house, and that he would consult me, and talk with me ; but you see he never has any thing to say to me, except a kind word now and then, just as he has to the child. I should like to go hand-in-hand with my husband, as you and John did, and ride about his woods, and his park, and his farm with him, as the Duchess of Altonworth does with the Duke ; and I should like to have a school, and to be useful. But he would not let me go to the school—especially now—he is so afraid of my bringing back the measles, or any complaint to the child.”

“ Well, my Lady, the baby will soon be business enough for you. What a sweet fellow he grows ! Look ! he knows you already !” and Milly tried to turn her attention to the child ; for she thought all the mischief lay in Lord Montreville’s being so very little like John Roberts ; and as that evil was without a remedy, the less it was dwelt upon the better.

The wished-for spring came, and Lucy was at once launched into the circle, which, to those who are not admitted, appears far to exceed in glory and delights Dante's "*Paradiso*."

Lord Montreville did not approve of her going out quite every evening, nor did he like her being seen at four or five parties the same night ; but he allowed her a fair proportion of dissipation. He generally accompanied her himself ; and without appearing to watch her, he contrived to know exactly what she was doing : but he did not make a point of never letting her stir without him : he took care to do nothing that should make her feel herself doubted, or that should cause either her or himself to appear ridiculous in the eyes of others. His proceedings were, as usual, dictated by the head, rather than by the heart ; and were, as usual, framed with reference to the effect to be produced on the world, rather than to any abstract notion of right and wrong. In this instance, however, morality and expediency pointed out the same line of conduct.

Lucy was charmed with all she saw, and she was also delighted at finding herself considered charming: but her gaiety was as frank and natural as ever, although more subdued than in her girlish days. She ventured to talk more in society, and there was still enough left of the madcap Lucy, to give a certain raciness and originality to what she uttered. Speeches which in themselves were nothing, pleased, from being so like herself.

Lord Montreville had now sufficient confidence in her tact, not to fear any outbreak which could offend the most fastidious; and he rendered justice to the perfect innocence of her manner, in which there was so complete an absence of prudery, or of coquetry, that no one presumed to pay her any marked attention.

This was the happiest period of her wedded life. The charms of London society had not yet palled on her, and, although her head was not turned with it, still she could not be insensible to the *éclat* of her present position. She gradually became quite reconciled to seeing less of Mrs. Bentley and her children than

she had at first wished, and she was not so much annoyed as she thought she should have been, at not having Emma with her at Almack's.

The Duchess of Altonworth was most kind, and she passed many agreeable evenings with small parties at her house.

Upon the whole, time no longer hung heavy. Lord Montreville now had seldom occasion to set her right on any point of etiquette, and when she saw him in private he appeared pleased and satisfied with her. But, although she did not always see his name in the House of Lords, still he was frequently absent of an evening, except when they were engaged to some pleasant party, in which case he almost always accompanied her.

The season drew to a close. They left London, and, to her great delight, removed to the Welsh castle, to pass some of the summer weeks among the wild beauties of nature.

All she had heard or imagined of the awful glories of the castle were more than realized. It was as vast, as dark, as gloomy, as massive, as uncomfortable, and as ghostly as heart



could wish ; and when first she arrived with all the spirits which the London season had infused into her, she was enchanted with the small windows in the thick walls, and the delightful look-out into the square courtyard.

There is no saying how long she would have found amusement in wandering about the oaken passages, and the winding-stairs, and in finding likenesses for her boy among the grim warriors and furred judges, whose portraits adorned the sides of the gallery ; or how soon she would have longed for some of her friends to explore and to admire with her, for, soon after their arrival at Caerwhwyddwth Castle an event occurred which gave a completely new current to her thoughts and feelings.

Lord Montreville, who had been out on horseback with his agent to inspect some improvements that were making on the property, was one evening brought home senseless. In descending a narrow footpath to examine the foundations of a new bridge, the horse slipped. He was precipitated down a considerable de-

clivity, and a blow on the head produced a concussion of the brain, from which the most serious consequences might be apprehended.

Lucy's horror and grief were such as might be expected. The doctor from the nearest town arrived as soon as possible. His report of the patient's state was most alarming, although he gave hopes of ultimate recovery. All the usual remedies of bleeding, blistering, and extreme quiet were recommended, and Lucy sat night and day by his bed-side, watching with intense anxiety for the symptoms of returning consciousness.

The doubt had sometimes crossed her mind whether she did love her husband as she had wished, and intended to do, and as Milly had loved John. But now, in his present helpless and suffering state, she felt herself so capable of doing any thing for him, of enduring any thing for him, she felt that on his recovery all her future happiness so completely depended, that she was quite reassured as to the extent of her affection. She reflected with gratitude on his having selected her from all the world ; she forgot his little particularities,

she thought only of his kindnesses, and she nursed him with all the devotion and forgetfulness of self, with which Milly could have nursed her John.

Weeks elapsed and he did not recover his memory, nor did he seem to recognize those about him.

In the mean time agents, servants, stewards, all required orders and directions. There were law affairs pending. Lord Montreville's letters had been carefully set aside in his study till he himself might be well enough to open them, when Lucy received a formal epistle from the agent, informing her that among these letters there were some, containing papers which it was absolutely necessary should be returned for signature. Lucy made up her mind that she must open the letters.

Before she went to Lord Montreville's study to proceed with the necessary routine, she looked into the sick room, to see that all was quiet and comfortable.

She was again closing the curtains, when she was almost overcome with joy at hearing him utter, in feeble accents, " Lucy, do not leave me !"

## CHAPTER XI.

Se a ciascuno l'interno affanno  
Si leggesse in fronte scritto,  
Quanti mai che invidia fanno  
Ci farebbero pietà.

METASTASIO.

LUCY could scarcely command herself so as to answer her husband, without betraying a degree of emotion which might have been prejudicial to him in his present state of weakness. He thanked her for her attention to him; he told her he had often been aware of her presence though he had not had the power to show it. She bathed his hand with tears of joy and gratitude, and at that moment, when he was endeared to her by long watching and by deep anxiety, she felt as if Milly's love for John could not have exceeded her's for

her husband, her guide, her protector, the father of her child.

The doctor came, and pronounced the patient convalescent, but prescribed the most perfect quiet, and the avoidance of every thing which might in any way arouse his feelings. Lucy told him of the letter she had received from the agent, and asked his opinion and advice upon the subject.

He declared it out of the question that Lord Montreville should be allowed to attend to matters of business for weeks, nay, perhaps months.

Under these circumstances Lucy resumed her intention of opening Lord Montreville's letters, and of acting according to the best of her judgment. Several were most uninteresting and unimportant communications, which required neither comment nor answer; some were letters of correspondence, which she laid aside as soon as she found they did not contain the papers of which she was in search. At length she came to one written in a delicate female hand, beginning, "Dearest Montreville," and signed "Your Alicia Mowbray."

“Alicia Mowbray !” she thought ; “ I never heard of her,” and her eye glanced upon words which filled her with astonishment and horror ; “ cruel absence,” and “ consuming grief,” “ counting the moments,” and “ happy meeting,” and “ sad parting,” and “ distress for money,” and “ necessary expenses,” winding up with an urgent request for a fresh supply of a hundred pounds.

Could this be intended for Lord Montreville ! She looked again at the direction, at the beginning of the letter. There could be no mistake : it was most assuredly addressed to her husband,—to the husband whom in health she had so dutifully studied to please, whom in sickness she had nursed with such unwearied attention, from whom, though exposed to all the fascinations and allurements of a London life, she had never for one moment allowed her thoughts to wander ! That he, whom she had always looked upon as the appointed guardian of her honour and her morals, should have been habitually, deliberately, breaking his nuptial vow, preferring to

her pure and true affection the hired caresses of a mistress, and above all exposing her to the eyes of the world as the neglected wife of an old profligate, old enough to be her father ! The letter fell from her hand ; her brain went round with the multitudinous thoughts that rushed almost simultaneously through it ; but rage, indignation, and disgust, superseded for some moments all more tender emotions.

Then came pity for herself, who had thus wasted the bloom of her early feelings, and she wept bitter tears over her blighted youth, her worthless beauty ; for at this moment she suddenly became aware that she was one of the most lovely and most admired of women,—admired by all around her, except her husband,—lovely in all eyes but his !

Lucy had married almost from the school-room ; Lord Montreville had drawn a veil over his own former career ; he had studiously avoided initiating her into the frailties of fashionable life ; he had wished to preserve the purity he found, so that she still retained that freshness of mind which refuses itself to the

conviction of the existence of vice, but which, when once unwillingly convinced, sees it in all its natural deformity.

From long acquaintance with the world, the imagination becomes familiarised with what at first inspired horror ; or from experience of the weakness of human nature, the temptations to which it is exposed, and the gradations by which one error often leads on to guilt, the charitable learn to pity the sinner, while they condemn the sin. But Lucy's perceptions of right and wrong were not blunted by habitual intercourse with the faulty, nor softened by the consideration of their temptations or their repentance. She saw but the broad distinction between virtue and vice, and she looked on the latter with the indignant horror of youth. Charity is not the characteristic virtue of the young.

While she was absorbed in such new and painful reflections, there came a tap at the door, and her maid informed her that Lord Montreville was awake, and was incessantly asking for her. She started at the interrup-



tion, and quickly dismissing the maid, stood for a few moments paralysed.

She had looked with loathing at the letter, till her tears had all retreated to their cells. She roused herself, and hastily pushing the other papers into an *escrutoire*, she stopped to pick up the fatal epistle.

At that moment the servant entered. She instinctively crammed it into her bosom, but as instantly pulled it forth again, as if its very touch was contamination.

Lord Montreville was so impatient for her return, that a second messenger had been despatched to hasten her. She rushed to her own apartment, where she placed the letter under lock and key, and then was obliged, with what composure she could muster, to repair to the bedside of her husband.

He greeted her with a pleased smile,—he extended his pale and emaciated hand to take her's. “Dearest Lucy,” he said, “it seems an age since you left me; it does me good to know my kindest and best nurse is near me. I cannot bear to feel that what I love best is absent from me.”

His hand lay passively in hers ; her soul recoiled from him. She could not return the pressure of his hand, she could not meet his eyes. “ Falsehood upon his lips,” she thought, “ when scarcely snatched from the jaws of death, when still trembling on the verge of the grave.”

She made an effort to speak, and, assuring him the doctor forbade all excitement or emotion, she begged him to compose himself to sleep.

“ You will not leave me then ?”

She promised she would not, and she seated herself by the bedside. All was quiet ; he gradually dozed off into a light slumber ; and there she sat bewildered, confused, fancying all that had occurred must be a dream ! Could he speak so kindly, so tenderly, and yet be false ? Could he address her as the being he loved best, while he preferred to her this Alicia ? Could he, with death staring him in the face, thus add a deliberate lie to all his other sins ? Yet there existed the letter—the letter which expressed implicit reliance on his affections !

She gazed on him as he slept, and looked back to the moment when he had first recognized her, and thought was it possible one little hour could have worked such a wondrous revolution in her mind ?

The truth was, that Alicia had been a mistress of former days, on whom he had settled a handsome annuity at the very time when his absence from Lyneton had excited such surprise in the inhabitants of Rose Hill Lodge, and from whom he had then parted, as he intended for ever, but who had once more succeeded in getting him within her toils.

For some time after his marriage he had neither heard nor seen anything of her ; but when he came to London in the spring, he received from her a letter, stating that she had been robbed of the money he allowed her—that she was deeply in debt, and was threatened with an execution in her house, and with the prospect of being sent to prison. He could not do otherwise than ascertain the truth of this history, and interfere to save her from such wretchedness. She was still very handsome, in deep grief, and

in great agitation at again seeing him. He relieved her immediate wants, and occasionally visited her, for which visits she expressed the greatest gratitude, and from which she contrived to extract considerable additions to her allowance. He did not thoroughly believe in her passionate devotion to him, but he could not be cruel to a person who had acquired the sort of hold over him which is obtained by long habit.

He did not consider that this renewal of his former acquaintance at all interfered with his making an excellent husband, for he treated his wife with all possible respect and attention; she had everything that an unlimited command of money could procure her, and he imagined that the whole guilt of infidelity, consisted in its coming to the knowledge, and consequently hurting the feelings, of the wife.

If he had been obliged to make his election between them, he would not have hesitated for a moment; but there was nothing, to his mind, incompatible in the two connexions.

In fact, his sentiments for Lucy had of late rather increased than diminished in warmth; for he could not but respect the singleness of heart with which she passed through the ordeal of a London season, so dangerous to a young and lovely married woman of high rank, and especially to one who was the fashion. As the mother of his son and heir, she had an additional claim on his affections that no other woman had ever possessed; and the attention with which she had nursed him, had now awakened in his bosom, stronger emotions of tenderness than he had thought himself capable of feeling.

The expressions which fell from his lips came straight from his heart, although, at that moment, they appeared to Lucy to be an insulting refinement of deceit.

During the hour which she passed watching his slumbers, she seemed to live a long life of bitter and confused thoughts, and she was unutterably relieved when the entrance of the physician enabled her to make her escape, and to lock herself into her room, there to meditate on the past, the present, and the future.

On looking back she remembered a thousand circumstances which to her unsuspicious mind had seemed of no import at the time, but which now proved to her that this connexion was one of some standing. She remembered having heard persons allude to debates in the House of Lords, at which he had been obliged to confess he had not been present, although he had been absent from her all the evening. She remembered how little she had seen of him during her confinement ; she looked at the fatal letter, and felt certain she had often seen notes in the same handwriting, and she became more and more indignant to think she had long been a neglected, an injured, and a duped wife. She recollected the rigid notions of female propriety which he professed ; she thought the care he had taken of her morals, the censorship which he exercised over the books she read, an insulting mockery. She could almost smile in bitterness at his having forbidden her reading *Delphine*, and made her return *Adam Blair* to the library,—and at the remark he made to some one who wondered she had never yet

read *La Nouvelle Heloise* — that he was surprised at any woman who had read the first three lines of the introduction owning she had read any further.

“And I was grateful to him,” she thought, “for thus watching over me. I fancied it argued affection for me, and a love of virtue in himself, while he was thus treating me like a fool, and laughing at his childish dupe! No wonder he wished to preserve the ignorance which was so convenient to him. This taste for purity in which I so rejoiced, was but the veil to conceal his own vice. And I am bound for life to this man. I must drag on a weary existence, forced, Heaven knows how unwillingly, to break my marriage vow; for how can I love, how can I honour, what I despise and condemn?”

Floods of tears came to the relief of her bursting heart and bursting head. She wept, till she was once more calm, and could look with some degree of composure upon the actual position in which she was placed.

In the first instance she resolved, although she could never again find pleasure in the

performance of her duty, that she would rigidly adhere to it, that she would command all outward expression of her emotions, and that she would continue to nurse Lord Montreville, if possible, with the same devotion as before. She made up her mind that when she had succeeded in finding the papers for which the lawyer had written, she would lock up all the letters together, and when Lord Montreville was well enough to attend to his own affairs again, she would explain the circumstances under which she had been obliged to search for these papers, and give him the key of the escrutoire without any farther remark.

When she had despatched the papers, and safely deposited the letters according to her intention, she felt somewhat relieved, and was enabled to return once more to the sick room, and take her station there as usual.

Fortunately he spoke but little, and she was spared any fresh ebullitions of tenderness on his part. In the evening she repaired to the nursery, where Milly was rapturous in her



congratulations upon his Lordship's wonderful improvement.

“Well, my Lady, your good nursing has its reward at last ! La ! when first he called you by your name, and spoke so kind and tender like, Mrs. Gauzelee told me she never saw such a moving sight. And to see you, my Lady, take his hand and kiss it, and my Lord calling you ‘his own Lucy.’ Well ! it does my old heart good to think you have known such a blessed moment ; for I remember, as I pushed open the bed-room door of our log-hut, when my poor John said, ‘Why, Milly, t’an’t you,’ I thought the joy of hearing my husband’s voice speak my name again, would have quite got the better of me.”

Few people like to be told they felt this or that, on such or such an occasion ; still more disagreeable is it when, although they cannot disclaim the emotions attributed to them, they are conscious of experiencing those the most diametrically opposite.

Lucy held her child in her arms. She con-

trived to bury her face in its little bosom, and to remain bending over it, till her voice and her countenance were sufficiently under control to venture an answer : “ The doctor seems to think that, with perfect quiet, Lord Montreville may soon be quite himself again.”

Milly was surprised at the cool and measured reply. Lucy’s devotion had been such, that she could not doubt the love she bore to her husband. Her lady looked ill. She thought, perhaps, she had harassed herself too much, and she entreated her to go to bed early. But no ! she was resolved to watch as before.

“ My actions,” she said to herself, “ shall be under command, though my feelings may not be so. I will do the same I did before,” and she took her station in his darkened room, where, by the glimmer of one shaded candle, she usually passed a great part of the night in reading.

That night her eyes in vain glanced over the words, they conveyed no corresponding ideas to her mind. She imagined long conversations and explanations ; she fancied reproaches, ex-

cuses, she pictured penitence and sorrow. She convinced herself that, when Lord Montreville examined his letters, and found this one opened, he would be overwhelmed with shame and self-reproach, and that he would throw himself on her mercy. She considered how it would then be her duty to act; she consulted her own heart whether she should then be able to restore him to the same place in her affections. She tried to lower her standard of manly excellence; she tried to frame to herself a less exalted scale of morals. Alas! is not this but too likely an error to fall into, as the frailties and follies of human nature open upon the young and gentle, to whom it is painful to condemn and despise their fellow-creatures?

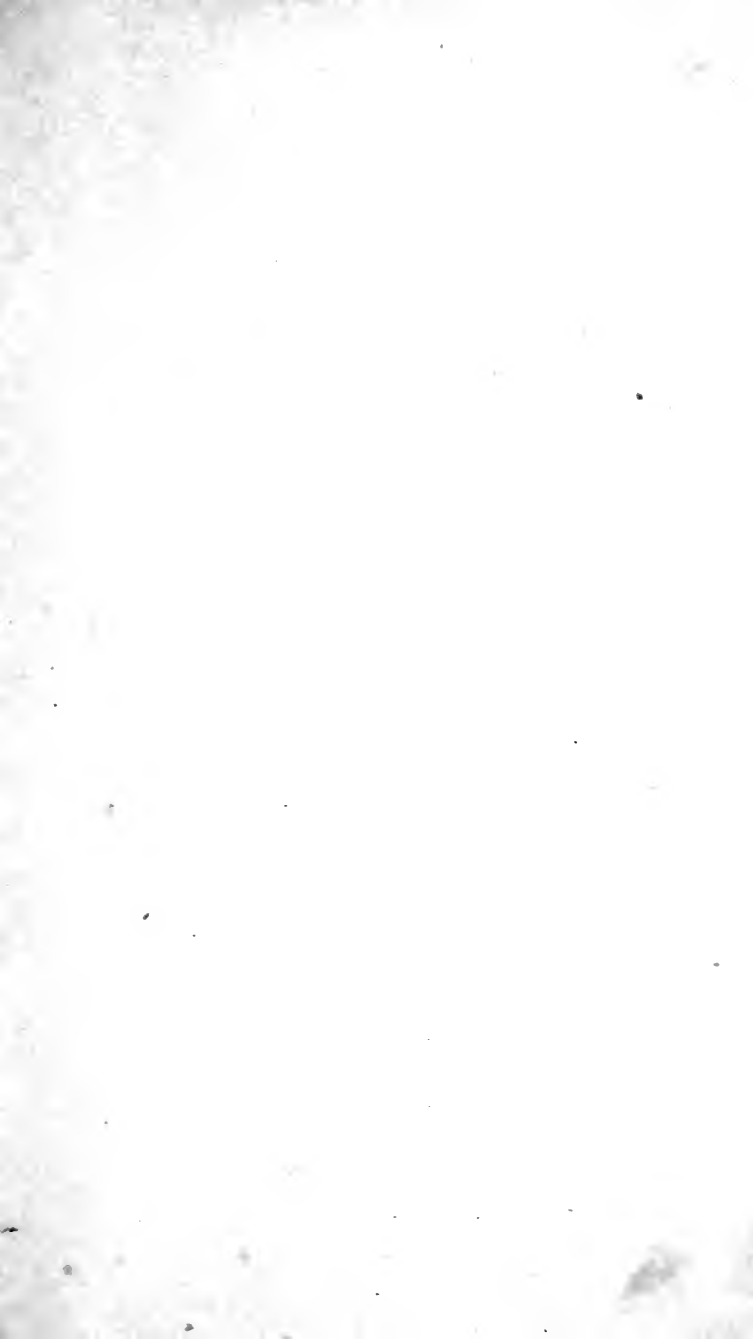
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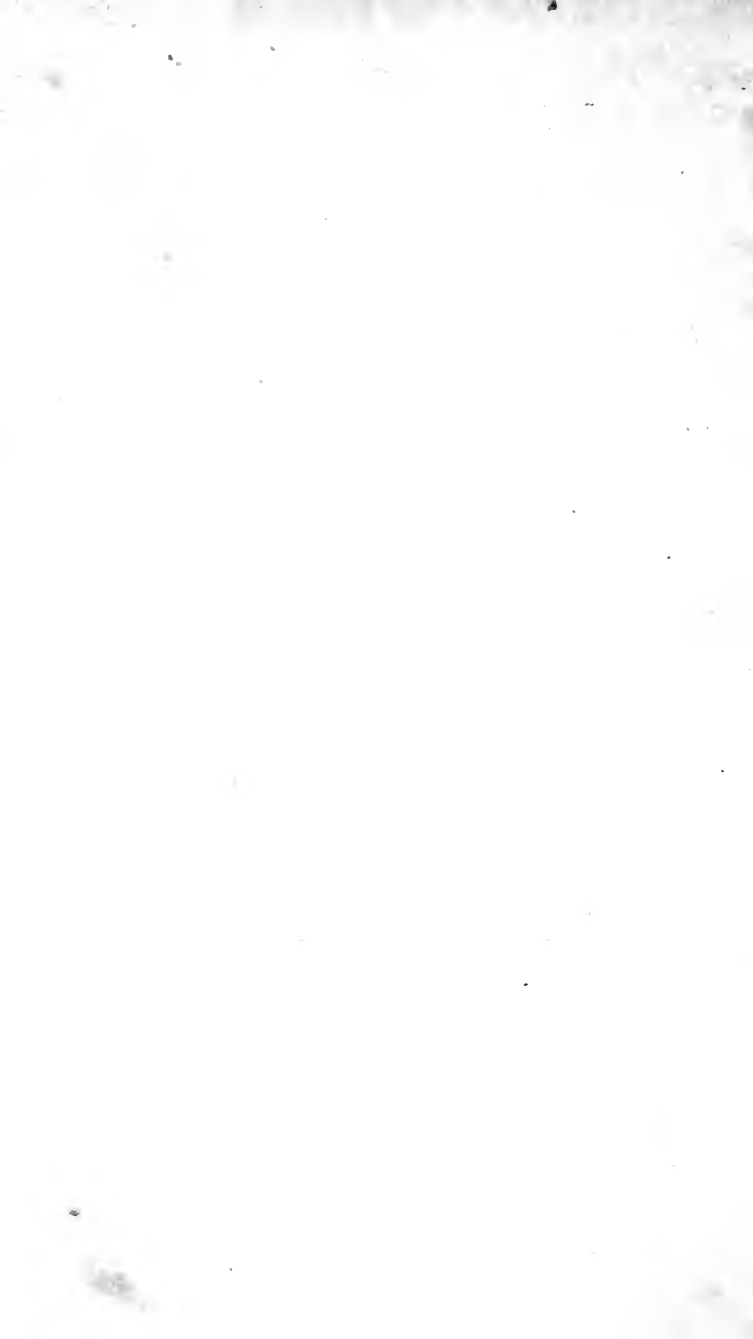
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